

DEVOTIONALS BY

“

A
GOD IS
ALWAYS THERE

”

AUBURN ADVENTIST ACADEMY



Introduction

The greatest need of humanity is a genuine relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. We are loved and accepted by an all-powerful, holy, and gracious God. It is His love that allows us to cross boundaries, culture, religions, ethnicity, race, and gender to share our stories of God and all He has done in our lives. This devotional book has been written by the students of Auburn Adventist Academy with a singular purpose; to show that GOD IS ALWAYS THERE. No matter where life may find you, God is near and ever present in your life.

-Campus Ministries



You're Valued

By Aldercy Ramirez Diaz, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."
1 Corinthians 6:20

As we all know, it takes a lot of work to see yourself the way God sees you. It's so easy to fall into that trap of comparing yourself to others. You see others and you compare yourself to how you're not doing as well as them. You see how you don't do as well as your friends in school or how you don't say the right things. You see how no matter how hard you study, you don't get the good grades like your friends. All the comparisons that you make discourage you.

I, myself have fallen into this trap where you compare yourself to others. I would constantly compare my body to other girls. I was self-conscious about how my body looked, but there is hope. No matter whether you say the right thing or get the high grade, in God's eyes you have value. As it mentions in the verse, God paid a great price for you. You have value because God was willing to give up everything He had to get you.

So if you struggle with insecurities and low self-esteem, don't be discouraged. God doesn't love you for your abilities; nothing that you do would ever make Him love you more than He already loves you now. Since God's love is so great for us, it drives us to honor Him in all that we do.

God's great love makes us want to know Him, and grow a relationship with Him. I challenge you to stop comparing yourself to others and if you catch yourself comparing yourself to others, always look towards your God bless you. good qualities. Focus more on how you can honor God in your everyday life. God wants us to honor Him with our whole body and mind. Because God loves us just the way we are as long as we give Him our whole body, mind, and heart for His glory.

Our Worth in Jesus

By Adela Ebner, Class of 2020

Auburn, Washington

“But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.”

1 John 1:12

For me personally, it's so easy to feel like I'm worthless. Maybe someone said something rude about me, or maybe I didn't get invited to a friend's party when everybody else did. Maybe it's from past experiences and the choices made make me think I'm not worthy of anything. Maybe its people talking behind my back or badly about me.

Social media makes me personally feel so bad about myself. The expectations and all the models and people living perfect lives discourages me and, often, makes me compare myself to these “influences.” Are they really influences if they are influencing our lives to live like that?

It's so easy to let the things others do to us change the way we feel about ourselves. When my self-esteem gets low during these times, I often get into negative self-talk. We all tend to do this to ourselves whether it's calling ourselves ugly, fat, dumb, not good enough, worthless, and the list goes on. Do we ever remember that we're saying those things about God's creation? We have so much worth in God and we never remember or take that seriously. NO matter how bad we treat ourselves, we can be confident in God, because God sees our value and loves us. When we accept Jesus into our lives, we've been made children of God. As his children, our lives mean everything and our worth is all in Him.

So today if you have been, mistreated, wrongly talked about, or overlooked, just know that you're so important. God made all of us his sons and daughters. He didn't have to, but He wanted to and we all have a purpose. Don't let people get to you. Pray about things, because everything will get better. Choose today to speak and act like the person of value that you are in Jesus.

Devotional

Yuliya Vasyanovich, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

The instant I read this verse, my mind went straight to past memories of grief and hardship. We all experience it. All of us go through tough times that seem like they were placed on our shoulders just to weigh us down. When my great grandma died a couple years ago, it was a hard time for the whole family. My grandpa was devastated, and my mom was stuck remembering the great memories she had with her. But I was left feeling sad and guilty for not getting to know her as much as I had wanted to.

My mom's grandma was always a sweet lady with treats and a loving smile. Her husband had died a long time ago and yet she still lived on. Our whole family thought that she would live past one hundred, but at 85 years old, she eventually began to lose her once perfect memory. She forgot faces and names of loved ones she always knew. Her sons became like acquaintances to her. I felt extremely horrible because I knew I had missed my chance to get to know her and become closer to my family. Although I wasn't able to have a normal talk with her, I asked my family members everything about her. But it was never enough for me as it was never from her. Finally, I got up the nerve to ask my parents to go with them the next time they would visit her. It really was an awkward experience, but as soon as I held her hand and asked her how she was doing, all the guilt from before melted away.

There and then I realized that the guilt I was feeling held me back from doing what I should have done a long time ago. I acquired peace through God after I finally let go and faced my guilt. And my great grandma died in peace because she loved the Lord with all her heart even when her memory faded away. I felt guilty for not making an effort to know my great grandma before she had troubles. But God helped me so much with my thoughts and mindset, to go and face what I had failed to do. Jesus is always here for us. He knows how much we struggle with different things in our lives. I challenge you to be willing to give all of your thoughts over to God Almighty, for He will give you peace.

Look Both Ways

By Yovani Kivumbi.Jr, Class of 2019
University Place, Washington

He said, “If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you. Exodus 15:26

When I was six or seven years old, I had to go to a place called Sylvan Learning center in Tacoma. I went there to learn about math and on how to read better since my mathematical and reading skills were not great back. I went to Sylvan once a week. I used to like doing to this and I learned new things about life. Honestly, I think it was fun for me to do. I went to Sylvan for a couple of weeks and every time I went home, I was very tired, and I fell asleep. This experience was difficult for me. One night, when I was getting out of Sylvan, I was so excited that I ran on to the streets and I slipped and a car came out of nowhere and ran over my toe. My toed turned out okay, but what I learned from that experience was that you need to be careful where you go and what you do. Make sure you look both way.

THE CAR ACCIDENT

By Eden Yonas, Class of 2021

Kent, Washington

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

When my mom was younger, around 12 or 13, she was on her way home from school. As she was walking home, she was talking with her friends and not paying attention to where she was going. She was about to cross the road, not knowing that a car was driving at full speed. In result of this the car ran over her foot. There was so much adrenaline running through her veins. She wasn't even worried about the fact that she had just gotten hurt severely, she was worried about what her mom was going to say.

Her mom had warned her that very morning to be careful, and to be aware of her surrounding but she didn't listen, and it resulted in her getting hurt. She didn't want her mom to be mad at her even though it wasn't entirely her fault. This relates to God in a way because when He sent Jesus to save us, Jesus was worried about the people and not about the fact that He was in pain on the cross. He put others first. And that is something we should learn to do also.

Green Light

By Aaron Parks, Class of 2019

Black Diamond, Washington

And it will be said: “Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people. Isaiah 57:14

When I was growing up, a common theme I heard from people from all walks of life was about how terrible red lights could be. People would constantly complain about how they would somehow manage to hit every red light in their path, no matter the odds. They would tell stories of sitting at some particularly nasty red lights for upwards of five minutes without any explicable reason and how this would make them late to important meetings and the like. These people would also describe red lights that would switch from green to yellow to red in a precious few seconds that all but forced them to run a red light. They also told me, for some unhelpful reason, that if I wanted to work for the government I couldn't have as much as a traffic infraction on my record. This unsurprisingly provided a young and impressionable me with unrealistic expectations regarding driving, especially red lights.

Well, when I finally started to drive alone in areas and situations where the issues could, and would, become a pressing problem I was irrationally terrified. It did not help that my initial experiences with driving were not exactly smooth. I was so afraid that I started to take five to ten seconds every time I got in the car to send a quick prayer for aid from God in the hope that He would help me. My fear was, admittedly, incredibly unrealistic, but it persisted all the same. I continued this way for several months before I eventually realized that I didn't encounter that many red lights. The few red lights that I did encounter usually only lasted a brief thirty to forty seconds maximum. I could literally drive for over an hour without stopping for more than a minute, assuming at all, for anything other than a stop sign. It seemed almost as if wherever I went, my schedule would miraculously line up with every green light in my path.

Since sustaining a streak like the one I was going through was beyond reason I attributed it to God answering my prayers. As we go through life, we will go through rough times full of terror and uncertainty. But God will always be there to clear our path of obstacles and red lights. All we must do is ask.

Finding My Way Back

By Alan Jacob, Class of 2021
Federal Way, Washington

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Psalm 32:8

My family and I have always been huge fans of going out and exploring the beautiful world God created for us. Almost every weekend we would go out on hikes to various trails. It was fun spending quality time with my family and forgetting about the stresses and anxieties of life.

Around April of 2015, when I was 13 years old, my family and I went on a hike down Rattlesnake Ridge. We had split into two groups to see who would reach the summit of the mountain and get back down to the starting point quicker. Our group, which consisted of me, my cousin, and my uncle, got to the top of the mountain with ease. The way back was the tricky part. As we were going down the trail, we saw a small little opening through the bushes. We eventually decided to risk it and go through the bushes and into the trail. We thought it was going to be a short cut, but boy was I wrong. 15 minutes had passed and there were no signs of anyone. We were starting to get scared because it was getting dark. We were surrounded by trees. We later found a warning sign on the ground that read “Beware of Bears” so we automatically started to panic. My uncle was stressing out because my cousin and I were under his responsibility and he did not want to get a scolding by my mom. We finally saw light ahead of us and started walking towards it. We finally get to a lake with a boat on sight and we saw it looking at us and came our way. We started to shout for help until he finally reached us. We explained to him the situation and he decided to give us a ride back to the entrance of the park.

Often in life, we feel as if there is no way out; as if there is no one that could pull us out of our misery; no one that could help us push through the toughest times, no one to guide us and ensure that we are taking our life in the right direction. But we do have someone, and that someone is God. No matter how far away you are from Him, he will always find a way to get you back. He is the light in the darkness that leads you back home!

Lost and Found

By Micah Siahaan, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. Psalms 119:105-106

During the early stages of my life, I was a very mischievous child that would cause endless trouble for my parents. They are very loving parents who show grace and compassion every day to my siblings and I. Whenever we would do something wrong, they would correct us in the most loving way.

On a sunny summer day in California, our family went out to an amusement park with the whole family to celebrate the close of another school year. All six kids were still in middle and high school who couldn't wait to get pass the entry gates to a kid's paradise. Once we got in, the adults situated everyone and made a plan to go on requested rides together so no one would get lost. It seemed like nothing in the world could stop this from being the best day of my six-year-old life. That was until my eyes wondered off to a gumball machine. Yeah amusement parks are cool and all, but have you ever cranked the knob to unleash a magical ball that would fall down flights of machinery straight to your hand? My six-year-old brain was overheating just looking at kids getting gumballs over and over again. I was hooked immediately. The gumball machine and I made eye contact for a good two minutes before I realized I was in an amusement park all by myself. I looked all around me and couldn't find a single family member but remembered where the car was parked. I ran as fast as my tiny legs would go, taking into precaution the dangerous strangers around me. I reached the car and stayed there until my family later found me with tears in their eyes.

That day, angels were all around me protecting me from all the dangers around me. I could've been gone from the face of the earth that day if I ran into the wrong person, which thankfully I didn't. This is a situation we face in our daily lives whether we realize it or not. We wander astray from God every day by doing sinful and unjust things that lead us closer to Satan's angels. We are drifting further and further away from God with every sin we choose to make. God sends his angels to us to protect us from temptations of sin and sin itself. He is the light that makes everything alright.

I Am with You Always

By Adriana Barahona, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“You have been with me in my time of trial.” Luke 22:28

Every time I hear this verse, I know God is trying to speak to me through it. This year has been one of the toughest years of my life. It has been such a spiritually, mentally, and physically draining time. This year I decided to run for class president. Not only that, but also decided to take some harder and more advanced classes. At the beginning of the year, I truly didn't know what I was getting myself into. Some people even warned me to not take those classes, but I didn't listen. Because I had so much going on, it really showed in my grades. Never in my life have I done so academically poor. I was so discouraged and soon found myself in a hole of despair that I couldn't get myself out of. I started to not care anymore, and thought, “what's the point?”

One day my mom came into my room. Since every Sunday, Renweb decides to send your parents your grades, my mom had taken a look at how my grades were and she was mad. Very mad. She asked why I was slacking so much and why they were so bad. Now I'm not the type of person to talk about my feelings to my parents, or even to my friends. I keep everything bottled up, and I knew I had been holding onto a lot of things for a while now. When my mom asked me that question I broke down in tears. I told her how stressed I was. I told her I wanted to give up. I wanted to just quit being president and being youth director at my church. I told her I woke up every day and felt as if I couldn't breathe. I had never really told anyone this before and finally letting my feelings go felt like a weight lifted off my shoulders. That's when I knew that I needed God in my life, because without Him my life was going to continue being a mess.

Since that day I've tried to better my relationship with God. It was also around that time that I found the verse Luke 22:28. God had been with me during my worst days and I know that He'll continue to be with me in *my* times of trial. So no matter how alone or stressed you feel, or when you feel like giving up, I promise it gets better. God won't leave you alone.

Show Some Love

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” Matthew 7:1-3 NIV

About a year ago, I went to the state fair. It was an amazing day, but as we left, we passed a group of “Christians” who were “witnessing” to the pedestrians. I put those two words in quotation marks because these people were yelling at the surrounding people to repent for their sins or they would burn in hell. A couple walked by- the pair happened to be all female. The “Christian” closest to us hurled an insult in their direction and used scripture to support his hatred. He even went as far as to tell the child, “Don’t believe the lies that your mom and her ‘friend’ are telling you.”

This moment has stayed with me for a very long time, not as a story of amazing witnessing, but as a moment where I realized that not all people who claim to be Christians should actually be called that.

Many outside of Christianity seem to think that as Christians, we’re all judgmental and that we think everyone who isn’t exactly the way WE are should burn in hell for eternity. Although this isn’t entirely true, I don’t think this reputation appeared from nowhere. Some people in the church truly are like this. From seemingly small topics like whether or not jewelry is allowed, too much heavier topics such as, how to deal with those in the LGBT+ community. These types of Christians look at these people and immediately condemn them. But this isn’t what Jesus taught. He taught that we must, “Love our neighbors as ourselves.” (Matt. 22:39) This doesn’t mean sometimes. It doesn’t mean when your neighbor is doing what you think is right. It means ALWAYS.

Our generation has a chance to change the world’s perspective on Christians. We can show the world that, while we don’t agree with *everything* this world teaches, we can look past that, and love everyone, as Jesus did. We can change the perspective that we condemn those unlike us. We can change the church into a safe place where *everyone* can be accepted and shown a little bit of God’s love through us. We don’t have to agree with everything about each person, but we can ALWAYS show some love.

Trust and Dependence

By Anonymous, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

“God has a reason for allowing things to happen. We may never understand his wisdom but simply have to trust his will.” A paraphrase of Psalms 27:5.

Sometimes it's hard to lean on others. Other times there is too much leaning. In every person's life, there needs to be a balance of trust and independence. Nations are always fighting for independence, whether it's from other countries, bad trade programs, or corrupt leaders. People need to be able to trust the people around them to keep them safe and do things for them. When a doctor is performing open heart surgery on you, you don't want them to have maybe prepared for it. You want to know, believe, and trust that they know what they are doing and that they have every capability to help you live. In my life, I need a lot more trust. I've always been an independent person. I have a hard time counting on anybody but myself, just because I know the harsh reality is that people have let me down and will continue to let me down. Recently I was playing in a basketball game, and I fell during a play.

My knee just gave out. Immediately I knew something was wrong. Usually when I fall, I get right back up again, but this time was different. When I tried to get up, I realized I couldn't put any weight on my leg. It felt like it was asleep. I had to be carried off the court. From that moment on, my independence switched to trust. Every class period, I must count on others to help me, even with the most mundane stuff. From putting on socks and tying my shoes to carrying my bags, people must help me every bit of the way. And it's tough. Sometimes people run off with my things or can't help me at the exact moment I would have been able to do it myself. My independence is shattered, and the only way to fix it could make my injury worse. I must trust that God will heal me and guide me through these hard times. I know God is there for me, but it's not always easy to fully trust that he is. That is why a paraphrase of Psalms 27:5 is my favorite verse right now. It says that even though I don't understand God's plan for me, He does, and I need to trust in Him that He knows what's best for me.

Heaven on Earth

By Aeryn Singer, Class of 2020 Auburn,
Washington

“In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.” Psalms 94:4-5

When I was 11, I moved from northern California to Shelton, Washington. I have always been an extrovert, and it's easy for me to make friends. But moving still was stressful. It took a lot out of me, and I wasn't sure how to deal with it.

We were blessed to move into a house that was directly on Puget Sound. We could go out canoeing any time we wanted, and there were 5 acres on our property of just trees and grass and plants and a stream, not to mention the neighbors' properties that we were allowed to explore. There were no kids in our neighborhood, but that didn't bother my sister and me. We spent a lot of time outside while the weather was good in the rainy northwest. But then the weather got all drippy and rainy, and we couldn't go outside anymore.

One day, after school had started, I was extremely overwhelmed by all the new kids, who I swore thought I was the weirdest kid on the planet. I just wanted to go outside and get some fresh air, but I couldn't because it was dumping down rain. Suddenly, there was this huge peal of thunder, and I knew I *had* to get outside. I grabbed my mom's raincoat, a huge umbrella, a tiny kids camping chair, and a book, and ran outside and set myself up with my umbrella and everything right next to the water as it was dumping down rain.

I think the first time I did that, I was outside for several hours. I needed time outside to clear my mind and relax. I went to my spot several times at that house. I went there to read, to pray, and sometimes just stare at the rain on the still water. Everyone needs a break sometimes. There is nothing wrong with saying “I can't do that, I need some me time.” There are times where I completely immerse myself in my school work, and it literally drives me to the point of being sick. Sometimes you need to take that break, just for you, and get to know yourself, or the environment around you, and especially God.

I challenge you to find your place outdoors, where you can go to get to know God. Find that place and read your Bible, pray to God, because nature is God's first Bible. God made nature to bring humankind closer to Him. If we could go outside more often, I'm sure we as a race could grow more spiritually in our relationship with God.

Ravens

By Todd Nelson, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom and barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!” Luke 12:24

Did you know that ravens are super smart? They can use tools, play dead, and even understand human speech! Ravens are perhaps one of the most intelligent birds on the planet, and are in the top five most intelligent creatures. The Bible tells us they're smart too. In Genesis, Moses sent out a raven to tell him that the flood had not yet subsided. And in 1 Kings 17: 2-6, it says that God commanded the ravens to bring food to Elijah while he was hiding in the woods from King Ahab. He said “Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I commanded them to bring you food.”

Even the ravens get some love, because there are two places in the Bible where it says God feeds the ravens, once in Psalms ("The Lord giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry") and once in Job (Who provideth for the raven his food when his young ones cry unto God, wandering for lack of meat.) In Luke 12, it says, ““Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom and barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!””. Just like Elijah and the ravens, God cares for you too. He will always do what helps you most.

In our lives, there will be people who try to attack us just like King Ahab did to Elijah. And just like Elijah, God will always send help, be it in the form of a raven, or your family, or even a complete stranger sometimes. Challenge yourself today to be open to God's word, and who knows, there may even be a few ravens in your future too.

Devotional

By Albert Nakka, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

From the start of the school year, I made a plan in my mind to try to be able to spend more of my time for God, and to use my time more effectively to get close with Him. I didn't just want to call out to Him when I was going through something bad for when I was in a “slump.”

In November, I went through something with the basketball team at practice which was something that shouldn't have happened. I was positioned as the team captain. I remember what happened that day and now looking back on it, I shouldn't have lied to my coach, and the faculty. I still always think of what last basketball season could've been and what if I had never lied. What if I never even let that happen at that practice. I would've been happy and my team would've been happy and I would have had a chance to be a part of Friendship Tournament and play in the championship game - but I didn't, all because I lied.

From that experience I've learned to not lie because there is no point to it. Lying didn't get me anywhere but in a deeper hole. When that experience happened I felt like I wanted to blame God and get angry at Him for not helping me and telling me not to lie. I stopped praying, I stopped caring about Him. When my parent would call me about every other night to keep me praying and keep my head in the Word of God and read my Bible, I would feel like, “what's the point of that when I probably won't get anything out of it.”

The thing about that was, God does not work that way and He is patient and He will always be the same. I didn't see it in the moment but I've realized that I needed to use what happened as a learning opportunity and challenge myself to get better with my own life and my walk with God.

The Surgery

By Anonymous, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled do not be afraid. John 14:27

It was a normal day in the summer, my mom was making lunch and my sister and I were outside helping my dad gather branches and debris that he had trimmed. It was rather hot outside probably somewhere around 85 degrees. I remember my dad letting my sister and I go inside about once every hour to get water and cool off because it was hard work. Then at around 1 in the afternoon my sister started saying her stomach was hurting really badly but we didn't think anything of it. After an hour or two had passed, her stomach just kept hurting worse until she began to cry. So my mom and dad decided it was best to take her into the hospital because they had no idea what was wrong.

Unfortunately, the drive to the hospital was around 40 minutes long so she had to sit there in pain. By the time we reached the hospital she was doubled over in pain and crying, so she was taken back to the emergency room right away. It seemed like my family and I were waiting out in the lobby for hours, but it hadn't been that long, then the doctor came out and said they had to do emergency surgery because she had appendicitis. My parents signed papers and then I remember going home and coming back after she was out of surgery. She looked so tired and out of it, I heard the doctor talking to my mom and dad telling them that if they hadn't brought my sister in when they did that she would most likely have died. They said her appendix almost ruptured. So I thank God that my parents took her in when they did or else I might not have a sister today.

The Long Haul

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“He will put his angels in charge of you to watch over you carefully.” Luke 4:10

A few years ago I had an adventure with my dad. My Nana was getting ready to move across the country to a town called Kansas City. It would be a long trip, but I was excited about it. We were driving in this big truck for about 3-4 days. We arrived at our Nana's house in Portland, Oregon, and stayed the night there. Then we started to pack. We packed so much the truck was almost filled to the brim. My Nana and sister were flying so we had to tow my Nana's car behind the truck for the trip. We left Portland and we were on our way. The best part about this trip was the views of the countryside and the mountain passes.

We arrived in Boise, ID, for the night. The place we stayed at was almost full, so we were very lucky to get a room. The next morning someone stole all of our gas out of our truck. My dad thought it was the Les Schwab tire truck parked next to us. I thought it was humorous that they would do such a thing. We had just enough gas to get to the gas station across the street. We then continued on our way. We arrived in Salt Lake City, UT and got to a little town just a few miles from the city. We didn't find a gas station and we desperately needed to fuel our truck. So we drove further and we finally found a gas station, filled up, and left. We arrived in Denver, CO, the next day.

When we got to my Uncle's house, we went through the garage door and there was a poster welcoming us to their house made by my sister and cousins. We were happy that we arrived. My dad and uncle went to unload the truck at my Nana's new apartment. I believe that God put His angels around our truck throughout the days we were driving and staying the night because without Him we may have not made it in one piece and I am thankful we did.

Devotion

By Alexa Armbruster, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways.” Proverbs 20:30

It started off great. We were good. Everything was happy. But lately it had been a struggle, not only to talk but to see each other. We used to text twenty-four seven and Facetime every night, and I would even go to his house every weekend and hangout. For the past few weeks we had not Facetimed, I didn't even go to his house and we barely texted and talked. Then the week before spring break got really bad... we almost broke up but decided to see where we were after break.

While I was in the Philippines, I had time to think and work on myself. I realized that if we did break up then there will always be a part of me that will see the bad in the relationship and will be glad it is over. I realized some stuff about me. I realized that I need the love that I deserve and more, not the love I don't think I deserve or never had. Plus in this moment there is so much chaos that we cannot put the love and attention into the relationship that it deserved. Who knows what the future holds. I hoped to be friends, but all of this was the unknown and I was trying to run away from it in the Philippines, but not anymore. I'm running towards it now. In the Philippines I prayed about things going on and especially about what to do about my relationship.

When I came back, I didn't know the answer yet or I did, but He shed a light on what I should do, and I guess my friend was also thinking the same thing because we both talked and agreed to break up so we can focus on ourselves. It was getting to a point that the relationship was getting to be unhealthy. Honestly to me, God helped a lot. Without him, I wouldn't be this happy and able to move on so fast.

My challenge for you is to go out and face the problems you are going through head on. The outcome may not be what you want, but once you face your problems it will be better for you. Try to stay positive.

The Father

By Anders Jeronimo, Class of 2019
Tacoma, Washington

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.” Psalm 103:13

It was cold. The winter breeze engulfed my small frame as I walked hand in hand with my father down the streets of Toronto, Ontario. I had not been in Canada for very long. I was only four years old at the time and was new to the sights and sounds of the country. I did not fully understand why I was there in the first place. All I knew was that Dad had gone to Peru; but, when he tried to return, he couldn't. I remember eagerly talking to him over the phone, but his voice sounded melancholic knowing he wouldn't be able to come home anytime soon.

Later, I found myself at a McDonald's in Canada with a family friend. I wasn't exactly sure where I was, but then I saw my father. I ran excitedly toward him, and he met me with a warm embrace. My driver greeted my father and bade us farewell. I was overjoyed at the sight of my father, yet his visage seemed tainted. He had more stubble, and his eyes were heavy. And, though he smiled and indulged my childish innocence, he was stressed and worried. Once we found an adequate apartment, Mom came to visit us. She would arrive late at night in scrubs and look exhausted and downcast like Dad. But, when we were all together, the apartment seemed brighter, warmer. Mom assured me that we would all be back home, eventually. But, when Mom wasn't with us, Dad took care of me and tried to produce joy out of the situation. Despite these efforts, I couldn't help being slightly flustered by these circumstances. Still, it was during this confusion that I experienced one of my fondest memories.

The wind started blowing harder; my jacket was no match for the frigid climate. We were almost at the Metro grocery store. My father picked me up, and I clung to him. For the next few yards, I forgot about the cruel gale; I only felt the arms of my father. I knew that no matter what, my father would be there with me. Just as I held on to my father, so must we to our Father in the midst of turmoil. The warmth of His love shelters us from the chaos around us and provides us with hope for the future. If an imperfect, earthly father can display such love for his child, how much more so does our Heavenly Father?

Written in the Sky

By Ali Walter, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truths and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.” Psalm 25:4-5

I am now at the end of my Junior year in high school. People are constantly asking me if I know where I am going to go to college or if I know what I am going to do when I grow up. For a long time, I would say that I wasn't sure yet and that I would figure it out later. I never asked God for guidance in where He wanted me to go to college or what I should study. I would then start praying about it and I had anticipated it to be written in the sky where I should go and what I should do. However, that's not always how God works. I was once told that many times the plan that we want for ourselves will be similar to the plan God has for us. He does not want us to be miserable so His plan will be what's best for us. God also is not going to write everything out in the sky for you. He will make it known to you what is best if you just listen to what He is telling you. In order to know what He is telling you, you need to be close with God. This was one of my biggest struggles. I would want God's guidance but I would not always be able to know what He was telling me because I was not super close with Him.

God will always answer your prayers. It might not be how you want it to be answered and you might not always realize it at first, but He is a faithful God. Once you start listening to what He is telling you, you won't have to worry about the future because you can have faith in the fact that God will take care of you. He won't let you do the wrong thing as long as you follow His guidance for you.

The Hand of God

By Sherlock Gao, Class of 2019

Shanxi, China

O Lord, my God, I come to you for protection; rescue me and save me from all who pursue me. Psalm 7:1

When I was little, five or six years old, I used to like going to swim with my brother, Peter. I was not a good swimmer, so I usually took a swim ring and Peter would leave me at the shallow water and swim around the pool. One day, I was playing in the water with delight and didn't notice that I was in the deep end. I slipped out of the swim ring because I thought I was still in the shallow water. Suddenly, I realized that my feet didn't reach the bottom of the pool. I was overcome with fear. I struggled desperately, however; I was still sinking. I could feel the water starting to creep into my nose and mouth. My body became extremely cold. I thought I would die in that pool.

I was desperate and started asking for help in my mind since I couldn't say anything beneath the water. Just before I lost consciousness, all the sudden, I felt a hand grab my right arm. Instead of sinking, I started to rise. The last thing I could remember was a beam of light in front of my eyes. Then I woke up on the side of the swimming pool. And I saw the face of my brother. I tried to find the person who saved my life but there was always an answer in my mind. That was the hand of God. Now, I am a good swimmer and I eventually became a lifeguard. Every time I got into the water; I thank God for saving my life. More importantly, if you don't know how to swim, do not get close to the swimming pool!

Who is Jesus to Me?

By Allana Thomas, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Surely every man walks about like a shadow, surely they busy themselves in vain, he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.” Psalms 39:6

Jesus, to me, means peace. Personally, I tend to worry a lot. Like lots of high schoolers, I find it hard sometimes to balance school and home life daily. It feels like I'm constantly moving. Whether it be my brain racing at night before I go to bed or physically moving from class to class, building to building, assignment to assignment. There's always a new deadline and many times it's hard for me to stay grounded and keep things in perspective.

But Jesus was busy too. He had people to help, heal, and teach. He was always moving, always doing yet he never worried or got stressed out. It's unbelievable to me how a man who literally held the weight of the world on his shoulders never once let the business of life get to Him. If Jesus, the man who literally died on a cross for people who hated the idea of Him never worried, why should I? He was at peace throughout His entire life because of His communion with His Father. Because He was so connected to Him. Because He spoke with Him every day, He knew how to handle all the things He was dealing with on earth and was able to do what He was sent to do. He is peace because he had so much.

Psalms 39:6 says, “surely every man walks about like a shadow, surely they busy themselves in vain, he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.” And I think that's true of all of us students. We work so hard now to get ourselves the future that we think we want, a future that our parents will be proud of, but a future with so many uncertainties. Because of all of that we are completely justified in our worrying, but we really don't have to because if we put our trust in God we'll have access to his ultimate gift, Jesus, who is peace.

The Bike accident

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3

I've always dreamt of having my own bike but it got to a point where I never wanted to have one because of an experience that I went through when I was a little kid. It happened when school was out. I was born in Tonga, so our school finished in November. One morning, I woke up to people who talking so loud outside, so I went outside and it was my older brother's friends. They were just doing their thing and for a long time. I saw somebody coming through our little alley and it was one of my brother's friend that came on a bike and he just came to hangout because school was out but when I saw that bike the first thing that came to my mind was to ride that bike and so I went to my room and started making a plan to go take the bike and just go cruise around; however, there was one problem, the bike was being watched, so I had to make a plan to get the bike without getting caught.

So I did. I got the bike and started riding around but as I was going to turn around and go back home I came down this steep hill and I started going so fast that I had to hit the brakes but there was one problem, the bike didn't have any brakes. I did I try to turn across the road to go back home and I thought there were no vehicle coming but as I took that turn, I felt a big bang! On my right side, I fell down and went to sleep for a while, I don't know how many minutes or seconds that I was laying down, but as I woke up, I saw the driver walking toward me, asking me if am alright, I said yes, and I learned a lot of lessons after my recovery from the accident, so I think this story reflects on a lot of people in this world, like we tend to not listen and sometimes we know it's bad but we still do it, so we all need listen to God.

True Worth

By Ashley Estes, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets." Luke 6:26

"I scroll through my feed and wish I had my life
I watch as people lose their worth comparing followers and likes
They tell you that you'll be successful
If you become more like them
But your power comes from the unique ways that you're you.
I have never done well at fitting into a square box
I compare my squares to theirs
And all of a sudden I feel lost
Then there is a pressure to constantly produce perfect art
It is forgotten instantly and then you're right back at the start
How can I be original in a space with so much noise?
I suppose all I really have is my own authentic voice
It is a dangerous game that we're all playing
Chasing money, chasing fame
And finding our core values straying
If a flower worried about instant gratification she would never have time to bloom
So turn off your phone
Put your hands on your heart
And give yourself some room
I promise, that double beat is more real than any content you consume"

At Auburn, there are amazing individuals, but to go along with this, there are also students who aren't as kind. People and students who only care about what you have done, what materialistic items you own, instead of who you are. They perceive you as someone who steals and lies. I have no doubt I created this for myself, yet I feel as if the only way I could receive the approval I'm seeking is through wealth and privilege. There are people who are like this, as well as others who, on the other hand, will continuously make you feel like you need some sort of approval. If you do something out of line, you get held accountable for it. It's the automatic response of humans to hold onto occasions which take place regarding these individuals.

Every school has its differences. Growing up, I almost never had a problem with making friends. It was so simple due to the fact that smiling and introducing oneself could get you a long way. These days I find myself posting pictures trying to find approval from individuals I barely talk to. I'm continuously trying to make friends through the eyes of what some would say is "a perfect lifestyle." I'll post pictures every time someone in my family gets a new car, goes on vacations, or flies premium, because showing that off will get the cool kids to talk to me. It's incredibly sad that I find myself doing this. What breaks my heart even more is the fact that students and peers respond to it and give me the reaction I had

previously been asking for. They tell me that I'm "so cool." As I come back to school, resume my classes, continue walking down the hall, none of these people who supposedly thought "I was cool," even look at me.

The character that goes along with someone, is much more valuable as you grow older and start recognizing that the materialistic stuff you care about now/or have cared about, doesn't matter. Easier said than done, because Satan is continuously going to make you feel worthless unless you have items and materials that are "high end." As I am hearing from a few classmates who attended the mission trip to the Philippines, these classmates of mine are so quick to mention how they have so little, and yet how happy the kids are there. This is living proof that it's the people, as well as the situations you place yourself in, that make all the difference of who you'd like to be, who you are, and what you find your identity in.

Think about what you could improve regarding your personal character. Is there anything you lack? Maybe something you do? I challenge you to find out, and write a few of them down. You can use this note to refer back to it when necessary.

A Piece of Cake

By Sunny Kim, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” 1st Corinthians 10:13

Three years ago, my sister was anorexic. She didn't just have anorexia, she compared the amount of food she ate to me and that was a bigger problem, more than her anorexia. She only ate, when I ate. If I didn't eat, she also didn't. Thus, I had to eat 5 meals a day to get her to eat some food even if I was sick or didn't want to.

If I didn't eat what was served to me, my sister and my mom got into a fight every time, because she also didn't finish her food, and that made my mom mad. To bring peace to my family, I needed to finish my plate, and that was often very difficult for me.

I prayed to God every night to make things get better and make me and my sister free, full of happiness and thankfulness about eating food. But it lasted so long, for about five years. I couldn't stay strong and handle it anymore. I wanted to give up everything. I always cried before I went to bed, and asked God why did He give this to me. But in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 10:13, it says “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

The temptation that I had at the time felt too harsh for me to handle, but actually it was enough to handle. God knows my ability and only gives me the problems that I can handle and learn something from it. Now my sister and my family don't have any problems with eating and I think this trial made my family stay closer and understand each other better. After I saw this verse, whenever I meet obstacles, I always think that this difficulty is just a piece of cake for me and I can handle this. Then the thing gets easy and is solved.

Knowing it All

By Ashlynn Hawe, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.” Philemon 3:8

We often think in certain situations we have the solution and we have the right words to make it alright. Well news flash, that's not always correct. We might think we have it all, and we might think that we can just pick everyone up, but unless we are strong enough for ourselves we can't be strong enough for them as well. This is exactly why we have God. If we just turn all our problems, all our worries, anything and everything over to Him, we will be hit with this big wave of relief and peace. At least this is how it has happened with my experiences.

I have had troubles with anxiety and things ever since my Mother and Father separated. Unfortunately, it has been a roller coaster of emotions. Because of these events I developed anxiety, panic attacks, and more. But through it all God has always been there. I just keep remembering that it's all part of the “Big Picture” that He has for me.

What's so great is that He puts all these people in my life for a reason that make me who I am today. I thank God every single day for the people He puts in my life because, besides Him, they are all I have.

One of my favorite quotes is, “We don't meet people by accident, they are meant to cross our path for a reason.” This is one of my favorite quotes because even though God has challenged me with all these obstacles, I have the people that God gave me to pick me up and support me. But because of God and the amazing gifts He has given me, I have found that I like using my experiences and help my friends when they need me.

Through all this I have managed to keep hold of my emotional reactions except for a few breakdowns, but we all have those. So I embrace my life experiences as they come. In the end, eventually they will go and new ones will come, but God and the people He put in my life are here 24/7. We all just have to have the courage to think and to know that God is doing all this for our “Big Picture.” So I challenge you to look at your “Big Picture” today and see what or who God has blessed you with today.

Sudden Alert

By Jermaine Helter, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

In my first encounter of realizing I was being protected all the time by Jesus, was when I was around 7 years old. At the time, I was visiting my grandparents, where I met my cousins who I so very much appreciate and enjoy. Anyway, this is where I started to realize I had experienced Jesus' amazing power.

It was the day after I came to visit my grandparents, my parents wanted to take us to a baseball game. We were at the baseball game; it wasn't any baseball game though. This game was where anyone could join in to play.

I was really eager to go out to play so finally they let me play. Although I was happy enough to be put in the game, they'd given me the most boring position, left fielder. Out in left field balls would rarely come so they didn't worry to pay attention. Only 10 minutes in the game, a ball comes towards me. I was a little kid so I got easily distracted picking dandelions. Somehow seconds later, I had caught the ball. I was this close to being hit straight in the face, if Jesus' protection hadn't been there and alerted me, a fatal result would've happened.

After that close call, I realized I wanted to be closer to Jesus. He is our never-ending shield and we all need Him in our lives. Complete faith in Him will surely lead to a better life and push Satan out so we may love and know Jesus. While danger may be around us, Jesus will be present and keep us safe from the wicked and violent.

Devotional

By Ben Wachter, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Galatians 1:10

When I was going from my 6th grade year to the 7th grade, my family moved from Medford, Oregon to Bozeman, Montana. When my parents told me that we were moving, I got excited because I was in a bad class and I wanted a new chance to make friends.

As soon as we had moved, my family heard that the Pathfinder club was going to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. I decided that I wanted to go with the Pathfinder club and make friends. On the first day, I didn't really meet anyone, so that night when the director said that if some people wanted to wake up early and help with breakfast it would be appreciated. After hearing that, I decided to set an alarm so I could help. I used my headphones because I thought with headphones it would only be in the headphones and not wake anyone else. The next morning, I woke up to someone saying, “Who set an alarm?” and I was like “oops...”

After that experience, I became great friends with all the people that were there. The moral of the story is for you to not be something you're not. I wanted to be liked for waking up early, but I became known for being the one who set an alarm that woke everyone up.

Galatians 1:10 says, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” Do you seek your peers' approval or God's approval? With the approval of God, you can be yourself, and from there God can work through your life and people will naturally want to be your friend. My challenge to you is to seek the approval of God and let Him work through you to help others and show His love.

Twistmas

By Stella M. Ga, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.” Titus 2:11

I’ve always been a competitive person, especially when it came to games. To me, games were not simply games, they were war! A battleground without blood (sometimes). On this particular day, I was at my class Christmas party. We had all contributed to bringing something to the table; our items ranging from gifts to games. At the time, I had a rivalry with one girl in my class who had decided to bring Twister. The whole week we had been hyping the game up and vowing to destroy each other. I was going to win. Failure was not an option.

She began to lay the Twister mat on the floor while the pace of the party slowed down. Everyone took a seat as we walked to the mat, while my teacher amusingly watched. We moved our appendages to the plays that were yelled out continuously.

“Right hand, red! Left foot, yellow!”

With each move, we tried to knock our opponent down. At this point in the game, I had the upper hand. She was a noodle with no stability. As a play was called out, I moved to make my final attack, but suddenly, one of my friends jumped in and “accidentally” knocked me down. Rage boiled up inside of me as I cascaded to the floor from my high horse. “KO!” She screamed. Then, simultaneously a curse word slipped from my lips as I hit the floor. As the word burst out, silence filled the air. My teacher choked on ice from his drink. Nobody moved. All eyes looked at me as I froze in place. My body went tense as I sat, avoiding eye contact with my teacher. His disappointment and shock radiating off his body. Then he finally spoke.

“Stella, I think you’d better sit out.”

After another hour or so, the party drew to an end and as we were about to leave, my teacher called me over. Thoughts raced through my mind as I dragged myself over with my tail tucked between my legs. I was bracing myself for the worst, but to my surprise, with grace, he said, “I was shocked by what happened today. I don’t think anyone expected that word was in your vocabulary. I’m not going to punish you, but I would like you to tell your parents what happened today.” I nodded and promised to do as he asked when I got home. My parents decided to make me write an apology letter to my classmates which I was to read to the class.

I often reflect on this incident and do two things 1) laugh (vowing to never play Twister again) and 2) think about the grace my teacher showed me. It reminds of how though we are sinners, Christ took favor upon us for our salvation. When someone shows an act of grace to you, be sure to pay it forward with grace to another.

God's Impact On Me

By Beverley Mwesigwa, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” Psalms 139:16

God has definitely made an impact on my life. If wasn't for Him, I don't think I would have opened up to my friends like I did recently. Ever since the new year started, I've found myself wanting to open up more to my friends because I like to keep my business to myself, and also I realized that life is short and anything could happen. Putting this situation off didn't help me or any of my friends in any shape or form.

I started to do something I never thought I would do in a million years. Every night, while I lay down in my chilled blankets, I have a conversation with God. The way I pray to God is as if He is one of my closest friends sitting right next to me. The first month was hard because it seemed like God wasn't there, as if I was not important enough for His time, or He was taking His sweet time to answer my prayer and I wanted my prayer to be answered in a matter of days.

One thing I admire about God is that He never gives up on us even if we give up on Him. I know after the first month, I felt a desire to stop praying and just give up because that's what I always find myself doing when things don't go my way or when times get tough. Who knows what it was, but something told me to persevere. When I woke up one Saturday morning, I listened to a song on Spotify, and the song kept on repeating, “this is the day, “this is the day that the lord has made.” Thinking nothing of it, I prepared for church. Ironically, this was the day I completely opened up to two of my closest friends. It's crazy, because when I told my friends, it was as if I wasn't thinking, like my lips were moving on their own.

The drive back home was awkward because everyone was silent, especially me. Once I got home, I had a “Jesus moment” and I started to cry. At this moment, I realized that God did not only impact me, but He impacted my friends also and He can impact you too.

Untaken Rest

By Anonymous, Class of 2023

Auburn Washington

Come unto me, all ye that lab our and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28 (KJV)

Alex looked at the clock, only halfway through the class. The hours of the day seemed to slog on and on. Each minute was a battle for Alex as he tried to stay awake through the duration of each of his classes so that he wouldn't miss anything.

This was the normal day for Alex. He would always battle though each of his classes to stay awake. Alex knew why it was happening too: He had been staying up very late into the night. Whether he was on his phone, doing homework, or reading a book, he would always end up staying up till around two or four in the morning. He had to wake up at six thirty in the morning. He was only getting two to four hours of sleep a night. During the day he was only half awake. Alex had made many more problems for himself when he was staying up late. His grades were slipping, he was unable to be as social as he once was, he wasn't making wise decisions.

Finally, when Alex finally recognized that it was his lack of sleep that was causing his problems he decided to have a full week where he would go to bed at nine every day. Over the week he realized that it was much easier to pay attention in class, he was much more alert, and he was able to better socialize. Alex knew that the better decision would be to cut back on staying up as late as he did.

Staying up late is not a good idea. It will make your day miserable as you try to slog through it. Getting sleep is an important thing. Try it and see the results. I guarantee that you'll feel better.

Frightening Time

By Jenaicia Trim, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

About 2 years ago was when I moved to Seattle from New York. The school in New York that I attended in the 5th grade was one of the most ghetto schools I've ever been to. It wasn't any regular school, mostly because it was in Brooklyn.

One day, it was announced on the loudspeaker that there was a real lockdown. My heart was beating out of my chest because that meant that someone was in the school with a weapon. I started to tear up when it went on for more than 5 minutes. I prayed to God in my mind that nothing bad would happen to me or anyone else. I started to think about all of the good memories I had in the past and how I could've gone to a different school and wouldn't have to be in this situation. I thought about how I could've been closer to God by being happy to go to church and not saying it's boring. I started to think about how it would be if I didn't see any of my family ever again. I didn't stop praying to God and asking him to protect me from this frightful phase. I struggled to hold back my tears as time kept passing by, and I wasn't really focusing on the real world.

After some time, the announcer on the loudspeaker finally announced that the lockdown was over. It was absolutely a breath of relief. I finally got out of my class and when I went outside, there were police and ambulance cars. I looked back at the school, and I thanked God for protecting me and being with me throughout that hard time. It was one of the most terrifying times I've ever experienced.

With many people trying to hurt others, God is always there. He promises to never let us down and to be faithful to us. God will protect us with all he has no matter what situation we're in, he'll find a way. Just like when I was frightened during the lockdown, God was there to strengthen and protect me from the evil. Satan tried to hurt and scare me, but through God, I became relaxed and brave. God still cares for us and protects us even though we sin, he still loves us.

Small Finger, Big God

By Melanie Jacob, Class of 2021,
Federal Way, Washington

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

When I was in the 3rd grade, I used to always slam my finger in the car door. Of course, I wouldn't do it on purpose, but I just could never get my fingers to be far away from the car door when shutting it. These actions would consequently result in multiple bruises and bloody fingers. It wasn't until one afternoon where one accident with the car door cost me a trip to the hospital on an ambulance, a week of delicious hospital meals, several exams, and surgery. My index finger was severely swollen and beet red, it caused me an immense amount of pain. After 3 hospital visits, they concluded that I had an infection and needed to be transferred to a different hospital. This is where the ambulance comes in... After a few calls, I hopped on an ambulance with my mom besides me and headed to Seattle. Over the days they did some exams and then said that I needed to have surgery.

After my surgery, the doctors said that it was ineffective, and that the infection was still present. I was facing the possibility of another surgery. At this time, my mom felt very distressed. She spent day and night besides me in a very uncomfortable chair. So, hearing the news made her very emotional. We prayed and had faith that God would take the wheel. A few exams later, the doctor came in and said that the surgery had indeed been effective, and that the infection was gone. We were all relieved and happy. I was very thankful that I didn't have to stay longer at the hospital, but I was also very thankful that many friends and family had come to visit me and knowing that I had many people praying for me made me feel loved and cared for. I even received a box full of cards and drawings from my 3rd grade class. But the best part was that I felt God with us the whole time.

In our toughest moments, God will always be with us. It doesn't matter how unimportant our problems may seem; God will always take the wheel. When we call out to Him, He puts His righteous hands on us and holds us. He is always there to protect us.

Reasons

By Stephanie Robles, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

As it says in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

In middle school, I went through a phase where I didn't know who I was. I wanted to be popular and I wanted people to like me. I hung out with students who led me into doing the wrong things and I lost my real friends because of it. At the time, it was like a high; things were going great. At least, that's what I thought. Things began to turn for the worst once my so called “friends” started showing their true colors. I felt so stupid because I had great friends but decided to go after popularity instead of fostering and strengthening those friendships.

This is how we are with God. We leave God for things that we think will bring us joy and fulfillment. That's not how God intended us to live our lives. He made a specific plan for us and He only wants the best for us. He's like that one best friend who always tells us the right thing to do but we never listen to. God knows what's best for us. He knows what's best for me and for you. Also, I'm not going to sit here and lie to you and tell you that I found my identity in Jesus because that hasn't happened. I've never really thought about it, but I know for a fact that Jesus is the right place to look for your identity. The song, *You Say*, by Lauren Daigle makes me think about how beautiful it is to live a life in Jesus Christ. Take a lesson from me and stick close to your true friends and stick closer to Jesus!

Prayer

By Samuel Moudy, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.” James 5:16 (The Message)

A while back, I used to have a friend that I would talk to every day and do everything with. We would invite each other to our houses and never want to leave. But then, one day, we started to not talk as much. Nothing bad happened—we just began to talk less, though we still considered each other as a friend. Because we weren't talking, I felt disconnected from him and felt almost like we weren't friends. I feel like we sometimes do that to God. We start talking less to Him and then get disconnected. Prayer is one of the most powerful things we can do as humans. We have an amazing gift to talk to the Creator of our universe! God loves us unconditionally, and He wants us to spend time with Him to get more connected.

When waking up, there can be a million things on my mind, and sometimes I have to redirect those thoughts to God and talk to Him. Through my prayers to Him, I can get the peace to get through the day, no matter what homework, drama, or sports can try to get in my way. This doesn't mean that everything will always be perfect and that I can breeze through it all because things don't always end up the way we want them to. But like God said, “I know the plans I have for you...” (Jeremiah 29:11). I know that whatever happens, God has my back. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, He said, “Pray continually.” This can be in anything, even just in small blessings or answers to prayer, or small prayers for others going through a rough day. God wants to hear what is on our hearts. Philippians 4:6 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” In his letter to the Philippians, Paul is saying to not worry about your burdens but to bring it all to the Lord. Prayer to God can ease our load during the day. Prayer can give us peace. Prayer can make us more connected to our Creator and Savior.

Give Your Worries to God

By Natalie Consilio, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

Anxiety. For me, it's that hot, clammy feeling, rushing through my whole body like an unstoppable river of fire. There's a heavy knot in my stomach that just keeps getting tighter and tighter as if it were trying to strangle me from the inside out. My hands get sweaty and I can't stop fidgeting with my fingers. My mind starts racing in circles, each time getting faster and faster until I feel my brain about to explode. It can be crippling.

God tells us to give all our worries to Him, and He will give us peace. He wants so badly for us to confide in Him and trust Him in everything we do throughout our day. All we must do is talk to Him. The Bible says "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ." (Philippians 4:6-7)

When we choose to put all our everyday problems and worries in God's hands, the weight is lifted off our shoulders and we can experience peace beyond our understanding. If you can let God be in control of your life, you will start finding it hard to worry about anything at all. You will have complete confidence in God and trust Him that everything is going to work out according to His will.

Mama Told Me

By Rishé Pierre, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord
Colossians 3:20*

Growing up, I was always a rather obedient child. I always took my mom very seriously so whenever she would tell me not to do something, I'd obey her and not do it. But this time was a little bit different.

One day, I believe it was a Friday evening before Sabbath, my mother was lighting candles as she does on most Friday evenings. Because I was young, I was still very curious about many things in the world, such as candles. My mom always told me not to touch the flame or I'd get hurt, but I was young, and I hadn't felt that much physical pain in my lifetime, so I assumed that it couldn't hurt that bad. As my mom was getting something in another room, I managed to climb up one of the stools we had at our kitchen bar counter. I looked curiously at the candle, glancing back every now and then to see if my mom was coming back. Because I was always told not to touch the fire, I became hesitant as I thought of what could happen, but I decided that it couldn't be too bad. I reached over to the candle and felt the heat get more intense as I got closer to the flame. It didn't feel that bad, so I decided to keep moving my hand closer to it. As I felt my hand start to hurt, I decided to pull my hand away before further injury occurred.

Although I avoided major damage, I still learned my lesson and decided to continue obeying my mom.

It is the same way with God. If we get curious and do things God says we should not do, we're going to end up getting hurt and hopefully learning our lesson. We also should obey our parents, as the Bible says that they were given to us by God. In conclusion, we should always obey God and our parents as they always know what is right for us.

God's Warnings

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. (Mark 4:24)

When I was a little kid, we owned a wood stove that was used during the winter to keep the house warm. My mom warned me not to touch the stove because it was really hot; however, my tiny little 5-year-old brain didn't know what hot meant. While my mom wasn't paying attention and watching me, I decided it would be a grand idea to just put my whole hand on the stove and see what "hot" was. What happened next was a pulsing sense of pain and anguish. My mom heard me screaming and crying and she instantly knew what had happened.

Through that painful experience, I learned the importance of obedience, especially regarding God. When God tells us "No," we need to listen to Him just like we listen to our parents; but we need to listen to Him even better than our parents because He loves us more than our parents do and that means something. Even when we mess up and touch the "stove," we can still go back into His loving hands and He will accept us. All we need to do is acknowledge our shortcomings and then ask for forgiveness and learn from our mistakes. Remember this the next time you touch the "stove" or do something you know you shouldn't; God will always accept you back into His loving hands and forgive us of our sins!

Jesus Comes Back for Us

By Rachel Nuam, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20

This month I heard and read a lot about the second coming. The other day during a youth rally, we saw a play about Jesus coming again and it led me to question many things like why would Jesus come back, and why would He come back for us?

Since I grew up in a Christian home, it wasn't abnormal to hear about the second coming, so I never really paid attention to it. Thinking back, I thought it was crazy talk. I thought it was just a myth, but then again, that was before I learned a lot more things. After reading John 14:1-3, I thought it was crazy that Jesus is preparing a place for us right now.

I was also scared about Jesus coming again, because the first thing I learned about it, was that everyone would suffer and if we believed in God, we would be tortured. So I thought it would be a lot easier if we just didn't believe in God. It was the easier thing to do, right? Well maybe so, but it would be the wrong decision.

These past months, I have realized what the true meaning of what Jesus' crucifixion actually meant for us. Jesus didn't have to die for us. He could've chosen to say “no” and leave us alone. After all, He is sinless and it would be perfectly just for Him to remain sinless, but He chose to die on that cross for us. When He died on that cross, He took all of our sins (past, present, and future), and He put the blame on Himself, so we would be sinless and one day we could be with God. I mean now that I think about it, that's the biggest sacrifice that anyone could ever make. He didn't die for us just to die, but He died to give us a better future and hope.

In Revelation 3:21; 2:26, 27, Jesus promised us the authority to sit on His throne, and reign with Him over all nations and rulers. While reading these chapters, I realized that God makes us more important than we actually are as if He's making up for all the pain we experienced, as if it was His fault, as if we have never sinned. Revelation 3:20 says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.” So I guess the only question that remains is, “If Jesus knocked on your door, would you open it?”

“Thou Shall not commit adultery”

By Almonds Sebirokwa, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26

One of the biggest challenges for me personally between the 6th and 8th grade, was pornography. Porn is one of the biggest secret sins that nobody has the courage to speak on. And it is always hard to address the issue and admit that you need help. The reason why is because of the fear of being judged and looked upon as a pervert. Which is totally understandable, so I will share my experience with this thing called “porn,” and how God continually helps me control myself. My first encounter with porn was in 6th grade. I was scrolling on Instagram and there was an icon that I clicked on that took me to site that today I wish I had never seen.

Something you must understand about your body, especially in 6th grade, is that hormones in your body are literally bubbling up, ready to come out. By 6th grade, porn quickly became my addiction. Porn became like a high to me. It literally kept me coming back and it always failed to satisfy. It would always be a temporary fix that would quickly fade away and leave me in a slump and in immense guilt. Porn was still prominent in my life on the low in 7th and 8th grade. I felt so much guilt and shame.

I had no power to stop the addiction. I would try by myself to quit but I never seemed to work. I would always go back. Then last year, something happened. We were comfortably sitting in health class when our teacher started talking about the effects of porn on the brain. Porn slows your brain down and literally turns it to mush. It also changes how you look at women and it can mess up some of your interactions with women. After that class it seemed as if everyone opened more about their experiences and I didn’t feel alone anymore. Once I became a Freshmen in high school, I was more comfortable with talking about these things with my friends and this gave me the courage to take this issue to God. I promise you, as soon as I started talking to God about porn, things slowly, very slowly, started to change. Whenever the urge came over me, I went directly to God, and the temptation went away. The more I came to God about my addiction the less power porn had on me. But it was not easy. I still slip up here and there, even to this day. I promise you this though, God can take away your addictions and give you’re a clean heart! He can help you if you bring your sins and temptation to Him. Trust Him, He is able and faith!

Over and Over

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

Casting all your cares [all your anxiety, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].

1 Peter 5:7 Amplified Bible

The summer right before my freshman year, I went to summer camp. The girls in my cabin were nice and we got along for the most part. But they didn't like our substitute councilor and were being rude. So, me and one of my friends went to go talk to her and apologize. Then the other girls in my cabin started bad mouthing me; and I already didn't like being away from home, so I was already upset. That night I had my first panic attack. I get really upset when people are upset with me. It stresses me out and gives me anxiety. I couldn't breathe. I was hyperventilating and crying. When you have a panic attack, it feels like your body is taken over. I started repeating this Bible verse that randomly popped into my head. *Give all your worries and cares to God for he cares for you -1 Peter 5:7.* I started reciting it out loud. Over and over. I finally started to calm down. I was able to take a deep breath.

This event was the first time I realized how powerful God is and how much He does care for me. It was overwhelming to me. I finally understood the strength of God and how powerful He is. All my doubts about God vanished. This was the trigger to the start of my anxiety and depression. But luckily, I know how to overcome it now. I just need to let God do it. Whenever I have a panic attack, I repeat this verse repeatedly. You don't have to have a panic attack to experience something like this. Whenever you are struggling repeat a Bible verse or just pray and you will feel a weight lifted of your shoulder.

Being Thankful

By Anonymous, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

Every year at Thanksgiving dinner, my family has a special tradition. After we get our food out of the oven and before we fill our plates, we sit down and go around the table telling about things we are thankful for. After that, we pray and thank God for the things we have mentioned, as well as the things we have forgotten to mention. This always makes me feel like we are starting the holiday season off right.

This year, one of my new year’s resolutions was to be more thankful. I don’t only want to be thankful on Thanksgiving Day, I want to be thankful every day. I believe that the more thankful you are, the better you see and the more content you are with what you have. Sometimes it can be tough for me to be thankful on a hard, tiring day; but I remind myself that no matter what, there is still something to be thankful for. For example, on somedays, that means I am just happy to be alive; and on other days, it means that I am thankful for friends and family who support and love me no matter what.

Not only does being thankful make you more content with what you already have, it also is God’s will for us to be thankful in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Another reason I know it is God’s will for us to be thankful is that Jesus was thankful. In John 6:11, when Jesus was feeding the 5000 people, the Bible says that He gave thanks for their meal. It seems to me like Jesus didn’t technically need to give thanks for the food, because He was already God. However, when He did give thanks to God, the food was multiplied. Because of this example, I believe that when we are thankful, our blessings are multiplied by God.

I want to leave you with one more verse in case you feel you have nothing to be thankful for. 1 Chronicles 16:34 says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.” I think that we can all be thankful that God is good and that His love lasts forever.

Our Ability or God's Ability?

By Gloria Oh, Class of 2019
Seoul, South Korea

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you." Exodus 3:11-12

I was a kid who hated being criticized and always wanted compliments, because I took every word people said towards me personally and drew the image of myself based on their words. I continuously assessed myself based on other people's words and limited myself when setting goals. When other people told me I couldn't do something, I eventually told myself I couldn't, and told God I couldn't. I believe many of us think alike, and in fact, Moses did the same thing too.

Moses was an ambitious and proud man who was eager to deliver his people from captivity. That was his mission. God wanted to use Moses for that mission. But something happened right before he left Egypt. After killing an Egyptian, Moses had to flee from the country since word spread out that he killed a man. The last thing he heard before leaving, at least as what is recorded on the Bible is, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us (Israelites)?" Moses had hit the bottom. He not only dropped from a prince to a fugitive but also was told the he was not the person to lead the Israelites. And Moses took this very personally.

Although God didn't change his mind, Moses fixed his mind on the thought "I wasn't meant to deliver my people from Egypt."

So, when God came to Moses after several decades to tell him to bring out the Israelites from Egypt, Moses said:

"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He was told from other people he wasn't the person to accomplish this mission, so he said the same thing towards himself and to God. But God simply told him that it would not be Moses this time, but God who would work through Moses, and "will be with" Moses.

We will continuously hear comments about our ability, but don't be consumed on those words to reject God's mission prepared for you! God is the one who gives and takes away, not the people around you. So be courageous and rely on God! That same God that worked through Moses is with you and will work through you.

"He is my Strength"

By Charlynne Dizon, Class of 2021,

Auburn, Washington

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

What would you do if the peaceful waters of your life got stirred by a storm? My oldest sister, cousins, and I were studying at an Adventist Academy 2 hours away from our house, so we lived in a boarding house. It was an excellent start in 7th grade, it was the first day of school in the academy when I was still in the Philippines. I started to let God use me in His ministry: joining and leading Sabbath schools with my friends. For me, I thought I was really content in my high school life: I had friends to rely on. Camaraderie in the community was excellent. We were exposed to ministries and outreach. The academy and scenery provided a peaceful atmosphere. I could really say, "Thank God! My life here is so good!"

But life gives surprises, and after a time of great welcome, I got an unwelcome one--and it changed everything. I became a victim of bullying. They were talking bad behind my back, and they were destroying my image to other people. There was a time that a group of students started drinking alcohol and convinced everyone that I influenced them to do it, but I didn't do that. They also threatened me that if I didn't tell the teachers that I was the one who put them in trouble, they would do something to me, but I still didn't do it, because I knew it was bad. These challenges really pulled me down. I realized God had been teaching me, but during this time I felt I wasn't ready yet to apply the lesson in this troubled situation. However, our Redeemer is faithful and true. Everything He said He will do. (quoting from a song)

The Bible describes Satan as "a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8) He is determined to destroy you by any means. He knows just what to use for you to be vulnerable or lose focus on what is really important. For him, a bridge with unequal strength from both sides would not last. But through this experience, I learned that "GOD WILL NEVER LEAVE YOUR SIDE NO MATTER WHAT"(Joshua 1:9) and He is always your true Friend. He gives us the strength to succeed, the shoulder to rest on. These challenges prove that we are still on the Lord's side, for in what reason would the enemy challenge his own?

Looking back, that was a blessing in disguise for God had a better plan. That was one of the most life-changing moments for that was when my Lord and Savior visibly held his hand out to save me and carry me to safer better ground. And His promises really lift me up and give me the strength to face my problems every day. Stand always for the truth, and be yourself. My friend, things happen, now the question: what would you do about it?

Always Remember

By Nizigiyimana Lucy, Class
of 2020 Auburn, Washington

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” Ephesians 2:6

Every day I wake up with a feeling. That feeling is called pain. I carry it with me every day and everywhere I go. But I hide it so that no one else can see it because I don't like people worrying about me and having to waste their time trying to comfort me. I always ask myself, “Why do I always feel this way, and why does God let it happen?” If God loved me that much, why put me through so much pain? In the Bible it talks a lot about God being with us and God protecting us and how He'll always go wherever we go no matter what. And yes, I believe that. I believe that God is watching me and making sure that I am safe, but for once it would be nice if He took away some of the things that I carry inside of me. I want to feel at peace. Live a life where I can stop PRETENDING.

Recently, I started reading in the Jesus Calling book. Every day I would read from it, I would be so amazed at the message I was receiving. Then I got to February 8th and that's when I really heard God speaking to me. “I am above all things: your problems, your pain, and the swirling events in this ever-changing world. When you behold My face, you rise above circumstances and rest with Me in heavenly realms. This is the way of peace, living in the light of My presence. I guarantee that you will always have problems in your life, but they must not become your focus. When you feel yourself sinking in the sea of circumstances, say ‘Help me, Jesus!’ and I will draw you back to Me. If you have to say that thousands of times daily, don't be discouraged. I know your weakness, and I meet you in that very place.”

Reading that made me realize that God is above all things. Nothing can get in God's way from protecting His children. He loves me and He will NEVER forsake me. No matter what I'm going through and no matter what's happening to me, God is my peace and reading that devotion was God reaching out to me and reminding me that He is with me... forever. Always remember that God Loves you. So, I challenge you, the next time you think that your life is turning upside down and falling apart or you have a lot of worries and problems in your life, remember that God is above all things. Turn to Him for peace and cry out to Him.

This is His Story, this is His Song

By Stephanie Case, Class of 2019

Olympia, Washington

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19, 20 NASB

I've never thought of myself as a super spiritual person or someone that just gushes about God. I love Him, I strive to follow Him and read the Bible and all that good stuff, but when it comes to evangelizing, I feel stuck.

Every year at my school, we have what's called a Student Week of Prayer, SWOP for short. Towards the start of the year, each student is asked to put down a few names of people in their class that they would like to hear from. Then, sometime around February, there's a week set aside for the most-picked students to share their testimony. It's a time for God to speak through peers and a chance for a teenager to share a powerful message that touches the hearts of their fellow classmates.

Every year, as much as it terrified me, I hoped against hope that I would be picked. I imagined standing in front, shaking a little from nerves but excited to share my story. Year after year, I was greeted with disappointment to find that I in fact was not picked to speak. Then it hit me, what would I even talk about? The students that go up, they have amazing stories: stories about a near-death experience, a life-changing conversion to Adventism, something that pulled at the heart strings about how God had changed them, the like. I'm not that person; I've been an Adventist my whole life, gone to church every Sabbath, been a "good Christian". My life has been a piece of cake compared to the lives of those students, so what would I share? What is my grand adventure of a story that brings tears to the eyes of everyone in the room?

The answer, there is none. I don't have a grand tale to tell, but that doesn't mean I have nothing to say. My story isn't "crazy" enough, but I realized as I prayed about this that it doesn't have to be. The story of Jesus is as crazy of a story as it gets. Jesus tells us to spread the Gospel, HIS story. Our lives are a testimony with His; My testimony is His story; it is His song.

Courage to Think

By Nathaniel Nesseth, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven't stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you'll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us." Colossians 1:9-12

To think is the most important thing that you could ever do. To look at a situation and reevaluate it and look at it in a different perspective is to think on something. We come across many situations in life where we have to think on them. And we as humans we usually don't think things through enough. We always think of the big picture or what's going to happen in the future. Not about the little tiny details that are right in front of our faces. That's when God comes in handy.

But you ask, "Why does God need to come in handy? Surely He knows everything and does not need to think." But God is not doing the thinking, He is helping us with the thinking. If we ask God to help us with anything, He will give us the strength to do it no matter what it is. For the God who created this earth is the God who created the human mind itself. Why would He not help us with our thinking. As a kid I was often unfocused. Not focusing on what I was supposed to do, I was one of those super hyperactive kids. My teacher, Mrs. Becky Ray, would help me with my hyperactive disorder. She told me if I pray to God and ask him to sharpen my mind and to think, that He would guide me and show me the way. She told me to read my Bible every day, and I came across these verses: "Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven't stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you'll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us."

Colossians 1:9-12 MSG

If it wasn't for my teacher, I most likely would have never been able to cope or find a way to help my disorder. Not only my teacher, but also God.

Pull Me Up

By Cassi Kiger, Class of 2022
Lake Tapps, Washington

"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." Deuteronomy 31:8

For the last couple years, my family and I have been going to a camp in Idaho called Camp MiVoden. It's on a giant lake called Hayden Lake. I'm talking big. For instance, there are gas stations around the lake for boats to fuel up because it's possible to go so far away from your dock that you run out of gas and can't get back.

One of the main staples at MiVoden is their watersports program, specifically wakeboarding. I've always watched the wakeboarders and thought that it would be fun to learn how to do it but never took action on it. Mainly, because I was too scared and thought I wouldn't be strong enough to be able to get up.

Fast forward to this summer, where, on an unusually impulsive decision, I signed up for wakeboarding. The next day, I instantly began to doubt the sanity of my decision. But, one of the staff grabbed a board for me and began to explain what I needed to do to succeed at getting up and how to do it safely. He set me up and climbed into the boat. Time after time, I would face plant into the water. But he kept on encouraging me and giving me advice on how to do it. Sometimes, I would fail to do what he told me to do, but he never got mad or told me I should give up. Eventually, I was able to get up on the wakeboard and ride the wake for a minute. I crashed eventually, and the staff member pulled me back up into the boat and gave me a high-five. For a whole week, I kept on trying wakeboarding. Even though I would always take a while to remember how to do the steps, everyone was always encouraging and helpful. I knew I didn't have to be nervous or afraid because the staff was always watching out for me.

That experience is kinda like how God is with us. God shows us what to do in order to be safe. It's up to us to follow his instructions, but if we don't, we could get hurt. He helps us along the way, always encouraging and never abandoning us. He helps us to get out of problems we find ourselves in, and He never gives up on us just because we keep messing up. He's not going to take us places or tell us to do things that will get us hurt. When we do succeed and do something right, He is celebrating right along with us.

Because of all this, we know that we never have to fear because God is always with us. We can go forward in life with confidence in the fact that God will always be there to pull us up.

Joy of Living

By Nathan Holm, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:18

Suicide is a pretty hot topic in the world right now. Suicide rates in North America have gone up by nearly 40% country-wide. This is a pretty sad statistic. Suicide is also one of the fastest growing leading causes of death in the United States of America. Suicide is an illness that is very heavily involved in the brain. While some cases of suicide are caused by chemical imbalances, many cases are a result of a tragic crisis in their life. For these people, it is very important that they don't lose hope.

What happens if people lose hope is that they feel like they have no reason to live, and that the world would be better without them in it. Hope is the only thing that could keep someone going. Luckily, we have a Man who radiates hope. His name is Jesus. He came down as a human baby to die for us, so that we may have hope. His hope can give suicidal people the power to overcome their feelings and come back to reality with a new, stronger belief in Him. Once you break free of the sadness, you can use that power to start finding joy in life. True joy and happiness are centered with God, so you want to be happy and find joy in your life, turn to the Bible and turn to God. If anyone ever feels suicidal, listen closely to their story, let them know that you are there for them and tell them about the hope that God gives us, or read about it yourself so that you can help them break free of suicides chains. Suicide doesn't have to be the end, there is hope and that hope is found in Jesus.

And He Will Come

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

"For the LORD himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And so, we will be with the LORD forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words."

-1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

This verse has been my favorite verse for quite a while because it was the verse I used at my baptism. I could go this whole time explaining why I like it so much, but I suppose that would be less of a devotional and more of my thoughts. This verse is my daily reminder that there is something to look forward to, The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And that's where the devotional aspect comes in. When I am feeling down, I think of the Second Coming and it lightens my mood. I like this verse specifically because it has such a detailed account of The Second Coming. Sometimes I get so caught up in this sinful world and this verse reminds me that I can look forward to this more than anything, and I don't need to worry about the things of this world. Another verse I really like is Philippians 4:6 it says-

"Don't worry about anything, instead pray about everything, tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done."

This kind of ties into the first one about not worrying about earthly things. So, I think that in general, reading the Bible definitely releases stress! Stress is one of the most dangerous things in the modern day and I believe that people should be working harder to prevent stress. So, in summary, we can always look forward to The Second Coming and we should try our best to not worry about anything.

My Friend Jesus

By Isaac, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“Greater love has no one like this: to lay one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

Whenever it was a nice day at Greenville, after school the children would go outside and play on the playground, my friends and I were always among them and having a good time. We would play games like tag, hide-and-seek, the floor is lava, and all sorts of other games. That went on and on until one time in 3rd grade when my friends and I went out to the playground, only to find it occupied. On the playground there were three boys that no one had met yet and we went to introduce ourselves only to later find out that they wanted nothing to do with us.

They were 5th graders, and I guess they had all just moved here and had known each other for a while. “This is going to be great” we told ourselves, we were going to get to play with the big kids, and we couldn’t wait to find out what they wanted to play. When we asked them if they wanted to play they pushed me and laughed. “OK, let’s play “Push the annoying kid until he cries”. I did not like the idea of this game, so naturally, I said “I don’t think I like this game”, but they persisted, and then were beginning to start when I turned around, realizing that “I had pretty much a small army, and that if a fight broke loose, we would probably win”. But something was wrong. Nobody was there. Then, one of my oldest friends, Oscar, who I guess I did not see, came up the stairs and demanded that they let me go. “Run-away!” I thought, but then something odd happened. The three guys looked around, and must have decided that this was a waste of time because they let me go. From then on, Oscar became my best friend, and I am so grateful for the risk he took to help me.

Jesus is a little like Oscar, but instead of taking a small risk, He made the ultimate sacrifice, dying on the cross for us. God loved us so much and wanted us to be with Him. He wants us to be his best friend.

Becoming Wise

By Tyler Siapco, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

Take notice, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise? Psalms 98:4

A wise thing that I was taught was how to give back to God. My mom taught me at an early age to pay tithe to the church which was always ten percent of what I earned. This helped me to set a habit of paying my tithe which in return, I was blessed greatly. Like when we were involved in a car accident we weren't seriously injured. Which was a huge blessing considering the person who caused the accident was going 77 miles per hour. And when the officer took my brother, his friend, and I to a restaurant to get us off of the highway. Another example of paying tithe was when I was working for a Lego sand crawler. I paid tithe and it made making money easier for me. The wisest thing my mom taught me was to save money and put it away for other occasions. In such, if there is a financial emergency you have enough money in case anything happens. That helped a lot when I was at our eighth-grade class trip and at a theme park and needed money. And helped when I want food to eat at a grocery store. Thanks to my mom's wise advice, I was able to do more with my money

Listen to your parents' advice because even though it might not seem like great advice they are wiser than you. And take notice that they are trying to help you and listen. Listening is the best weapon and best thing to do when talking to people. Take notice, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise? Psalms 98:4

Loyalty

By Michael Riswanto, Class of 2020

Auburn, Washington

“That it would please God to crush me, that He would lose His hand and cut me off! Then I would still have comfort; though in anguish I would exult, He will not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.” Job 6:9-10

These verses are Job’s sayings to his three friends that saw him suffer. Job lost almost everything he had: his wealth, family, kids, health. In this time, Job was discouraged. He even felt that maybe it was better for him to die rather than suffer. He almost gave up and wanted to rest in peace in God. But REMEMBER!! He didn’t choose suicide and give up on trusting God.

Often times we get disappointed with God because of our situation and condition. We feel disappointed, depressed, pressured. In these times it is very easy to feel like giving up and think that it is better to die and feel tempted to commit suicide. But again, remember Job didn’t commit suicide. Job just thought that death might be the best option to get away from all the trials, temptation, and suffering that God allowed to happen to him. The one point that I think is very, very interesting is that even though Job probably had reached the nadir of his sufferings, Job never denied God’s word. Job was super loyal to God and brought all his problem to God.

Brothers and sisters, I challenge you all, no matter how hard and how terrible your condition and situation is, even when you feel like giving up and think it is the end, and you feel like there’s no other way other than death. Never ever deny God. Be loyal to Him, bring all your problems to Him. Just like Job did. Because with God there’s nothing impossible. There’s always a way to solve the problem. So don’t even think to end your life. Change your mindset from impossible to I’m possible. There are so many Bible verses that will encourage you.

Matthew 19:26 - But Jesus beheld [them], and said unto them, with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Luke 1:37 - For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Proverbs 16:3 - “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.”

Philippians 4:6 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Believe that God is planning something special/amazing for your life. Just like Job being restored twice more than what he had.

Jeremiah 17:7 - “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 - “To everything, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”

Isaiah 55:8 - For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

Again I challenge you to be loyal, trust and surrender everything to God.

Arresting the Storm

By Nathan Parks, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Psalm 107:28-30

When I was twelve or thirteen my mother and I decided to go hiking. We were planning to go to Sunrise and head along the Mount Freemont Lookout Trail. We set out early in the morning in no rush to get there. As we continued along the trail, we reminisced about previous excursions. We saw a heard of goats' way out in the distance; took a couple breaks, and even saw a few peaks. As we were getting relatively close to our destination, the sky began to get darker. But we decided it would be ok to continue going forward. It began to rain a little further on, but we thought if it doesn't get worse everything would be fine. But as it finally came into view it began to get worse, the rain came down harder and the skies got darker. We decided to go further because we were almost there, and we assumed that it should be perfectly fine. The area around us was getting rockier and clearer. But then it began to thunder, and lightning flashed across the sky. We were out in the open and lighting could have hit us at any moment. We quickly retreated away from the open area and the storm and returned to the car. But we knew that earlier we were in a precarious situation.

I learned a valuable lesson about God through that storm. We often read the Bible and the various stories of Jesus calming the storms but never take them literal. There I was, in a storm, and as furious as it was, God was there. God is always there. He will be there no matter the kind of storm that needs facing, whether the storm is big or little, proverbial or real. When called upon, God will always make it safe and calm the storm whatever the circumstances or struggles. Through God all storms can be stopped.

God's Beautiful Gift

By Marko Miller, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts." Psalm 105:2

Ever since I can remember, I've always had a certain connection to music. I first heard Mozart and Beethoven as a baby, and then I sang praise songs and hymns at church. I always loved the progression of music, how it can tell a story and even affect your emotions. As I was got older, I began listening to and studying new kinds of music and learned how to make my own music by playing certain instruments. I fell in love with all of it, but there is one part of music that is very important to me.

I first started playing praise music when I was in the fifth grade. I started having a feeling of peace and joy while I was playing. Not because I was any sort of talent, but because I do not play for myself, I play for Christ. As soon as I away put my desire for people to think I have an impressive skill and think of me as a more interesting person, I became more content with my God-given ability and have grown more in tune with Jesus. Nowadays I can go play praise music whenever I want at Auburn Academy and help others connect with our Father through the act of worship through song.

God has given me the gift of worshipping and having stronger relationship with God through music. It is how I honor God and also bless others for God. If you are like me, that is how you enjoy spending time with the Father. God has given us all different ways to worship Him. Some people worship God by spending time with nature, others honor Him by donating money to charities or the church that will help people in need. We have all been given a certain way we love to worship, so I challenge you to find how you enjoy spending time with God and learn to connect with Him through your act of worship.

The Flight that Changed it All

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

Before I came to America, I never believed in Jesus or any god. I also never thought that there was a person that could save my life, lead the way, and make my life better. After I came to America, I started to hear many kinds of stories about Jesus. I heard things about the Bible or some experiences that someone has had with God. It is hard to make a nonreligious person believe in something that they think is not possible. I think that there are just some lucky things that happen in people's life and are not related to any god.

However, sometimes people will believe in something only after they have experienced it. As an international student, we fly back and forth between our country and America. Flying for a long time becomes exhausting, especially with no exercises. After a few flights, I started to dislike flying, and I was even terrified of taking long trips on the plane. On a trip to America, the plane started to have major turbulence. It didn't feel normal and it was heavy and felt like I was on the Drop tower. I was terrified so after a few minutes, I started to pray. I never thought it would work. I think the turbulent lasted for about ten minutes. Some of the people on the plane started to look scared. But after a while the turbulence stopped, and the plane kept flying. After that experience, I started to believe in God and from that time on, I kept my faith pointed in the direction of God's existence. Today, I'm taking small steps towards believing in God, fully. I am getting better at prayer and getting better at knowing Him.

HOPE

By Madison Muir, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“We pursue things which for peace and the building up of one another.” - Romans 14:19

Life as a teenager is hard. Finding purpose, peace, and happiness is challenging. Confusion, frustration, and wanting to belong are just some of the feelings we feel. Influence comes from all directions. Friends, music, fashion, social media and even food. Days can be overwhelming. We forget where to find our happiness and even joy. It's easy to feel helpless when it looks as if everyone around you is angry and uncertain. You scroll through your social media feeds and see article after article about the hate and unkindness in this world. Where do I fit in? How do I matter? What can I do? There is hope. We can focus on pursuing peace.

When we look for ways to make this world a better place, we'll see those opportunities. And when we actively begin to build one another up instead of watching others tear people down, we'll see change begin to happen. When we pray and talk to God, we live in hope. Studying the word also defines our purpose through consistency and knowing that we are loved no matter what by God. It creates peace, joy, and clarification. It's not easy, but by making this our routine choice, the right friends and right influences will be ours. We will make a difference and we will know our purpose. With confidence, we can know that God is always with us and loves us unconditionally. It's amazing when we look to him through prayer and study in the word that we can see hope, peace, and joy.

“Serve to Serve”

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. Galatians 5:13

New International Version (NIV)

This is a memory verse that I have known since I was little. I remember saying this verse in my class during Sabbath school. I also remember it was shortened because I was like 8 years old, but that's not the point. The point is that the verse has stayed with me for a very long time, and even though I haven't been the nicest and most serving person I can be, I try to be nice and serve people, even though sometimes it feels weird serving other people. I know it's hard but it is worth it to serve people and be kind because then you feel better knowing you have done something good. Serving people can be from anything like holding the door for people to giving to the homeless.

We were made to serve other people and not just ourselves. Even small acts of kindness are good. You never know, what if that person really needed someone to cheer them up or they just really needed help on something at that very moment, and no one else is helping. You might make someone's day just by serving. As a bonus, sometimes you can be rewarded for being kind and serving. The awards you get aren't always a huge thing, as long as you know that you did something good for someone else. That's what life should be about, serving others. I feel that this verse was written so that we can have good lives on this Earth until Jesus returns for a second time and takes us believers with him. Serving others can also show other people that aren't Christians that we are actually Christians and that Christianity isn't just a bunch of bogus. We can show the world just by serving.

Do not Fear

By Luke Han, Class of 2019

Auburn, Washington

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10

When I was 5 or 6 years old, I used to sleepwalk sometimes; however, my parents and I didn't know that I sleepwalked. Sometimes I woke up in the living room, my grandmother's room and even at the stairs, but I still did not know that I was sleepwalking, because I did not realize what sleepwalk was when I was seven years old.

One day, I woke up at the middle of the stairs, I freaked out, lost my balance and eventually, I fell from the stairs. When my body hit the floor, the large heavy knick-knack rack was about to fall. However, it only fell on my legs. I was injured, but it was not fatal. At that time, I was hurt and could not think about anything. Now that I think about it, I believe that God moved the rack to save me. I was injured, but it would have been worse if it had fallen on other parts of my body. My injuries healed quickly.

“Freedom From Fear”

By Justin Taina, Class of 2022

Covington, Washington

*“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalms 23:4
ESV*

Fear is an emotion we have all experienced, to varying degrees. But the Lord God can help us overcome it. Two years ago when I was on a vacation to Mexico, we went zip lining. This zip lining course was massive and spanned an entire valley over a jungle. We had a little lesson on how to use the handles

and how to position yourself and then we started. There were around six or seven lines, those exemplary in their own right, before our group reached the final line and the view was breathtaking. We saw most everything of the valley from a cliff and the zip line spanned the breadth of it. The height was also quite... fear inducing, to me at least. Even though I had gone on the previous zip lines, an irrational fear

gripped me over the length and height of this one. I was more than a little scared. But God gave me the confidence to attempt it.

I stepped on the launch platform and was sent off. Terror did overcome me again for a second as my life was in the hands of a thin looking metal wire. But moment later I felt a feeling of security wash over me as I felt the wind against my face and saw the beauty around the jungle. It was an awe-inspiring

view. I felt the thrill and excitement of flying across the valley. It was truly liberating. The Lord can free us from fear. Death may seem like a looming specter coming for all us, yet Christ conquered death and He gave us the opportunity for life eternal. We need not be troubled by terror, and especially not death, as we can feel secure in the knowledge that God is with us. God gives us His comfort freely; all we have to do is accept it.

Loving Yourself

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

"You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" Song of Solomon 4:7

Listen up y'all. You need to love yourself. It sounds easy, but seems hard, right? Well, I'm going to go through and try to help you. The First step is to make sure you are doing something you enjoy. Love cooking? Do it. Love to sew. Do it! Can't find the time? That's step two. Get rid of things you don't need that make you unhappy. Now obviously, you do need to consider what you do need. You can't just quit your job with no back-up plan or drop out of school after you went through all that but find the things in that that makes you happy. And if it's really putting a damper on you then find something else. Like, if school is getting you down because you don't like what you're learning, then switch what you're doing or maybe look at it from a different angle. Or if you're in a job you hate, look in the papers and job listings for something that you can switch to that you do like. If it's a person, talk to them and clear things up.

Try to make some downtime for yourself and you will find that you will begin to enjoy life a little more. Step three is to be confident, but not arrogant. Believe in yourself, that you can do what you set your mind to. Now you, like me, might find it a bit hard to have full confidence in your actions, but if you start with what you know for fact you will slowly build into a large pool of confidence that makes everyone take notice. Stopping complaining is the next. If you need to say something, then speak up! But, if it's something like 'Ugh, it's raining again' then just stop. If you think or say that, try something positive after that. 'Ugh, it's raining again. But now my plants will get water' or something like that. It helps and you will feel so much better after a while. Surround yourself with things and people you like. Get a pet that you can handle. Find a friend to have lunch with. Skype a relative. Do things that make you feel happy, but always keep in mind the pros and cons. Not to say don't do something because you now must leave sooner. But don't do something if it's going to physically or mentally hurt you to get to the thing. You just must play around with it and see what works.

“Not the Final Word”

By Kara Heisler, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

Psalm 147:3 “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.”

I know that death can be a touchy subject, at least it used to be for me when I was younger. When I was eight, my family and I went on a skiing trip. I personally am not very good at skiing and tend to sit down on the slope and cry. Well, I used to do that. Our trip was going very well and for lunch I got to have macaroni and cheese, which is still one of my favorite foods. When we were done with our trip, we went down to our car. It was dark outside and freezing cold. Then Dad got a call from our Nana that our Papa had an accident. He had been trimming trees over our bluff and the rope snapped. He was gone. Our Papa wasn't even very old, and I thought it was so unfair for him to die.

We drove all the three hours back home to be with our Nana. It was most definitely the worst ski trip of my life. Since I was only eight, I cried the entire way home. Even though I was young, I understood the concept that I would never see him again. I knew that one day I would see him again in Heaven, but it seemed like such a long time away. I don't remember my Papa much and it doesn't hurt anymore. The verse Psalm 147:3 says “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.” God healed me so I don't miss Papa anymore. I kept on asking “Why did God let him die?” The reason is because of sin. It's not God's fault that Papa isn't with us anymore. It's because of free will and that humanity chose sin. I just have to wait a little bit longer until I see Papa again, but that's OK. God has everything sorted.

Challenge

By Lei General, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8

Back when I was way younger, I was always afraid to sleep alone in my bedroom in the dark. I was afraid there might be some monster or someone who sneaked in to my house that would come attacked me. Silly right? When I had my parents near me would that keep me safe? When it came to my first time to sleep by myself in my own room, I begged my mom to stay with me because of the fear that I had inside me. My dad asked me, “What are you afraid of?” I could not answer. My response would make me even more fearful saying it aloud.

My dad then told me to pray for my fears to go away, that God will protect me, and that I can trust Him more. He reminded me that God was always on the watch for me wherever I go and whatever I do and that He promises to keep me safe. As a child I was not so sure about that. I was still focused on what I was most fearful of. This was not easy for me to do, but I am thankful that eventually I no longer had a great fear of being alone in the dark at night. I would not say that I never had the fear again, but when I did, I got over it. It was not just because of my own bravery. Sometimes it takes me a while to regain my confidence and trust in God.

I think this goes for all people who suffer from worrying and anxiety. When I am struggling with the fear that I have in me, I try to think about all the times when God saved me and how every day I am still being kept safe. Sometimes it helps, but not in the long run. It is not as easy as I thought trusting in Him. In the end it is worth it all because I would rather not waste any time living in fear.

When I thought about it, this was the most important thing I have learned in my life that changed me. This has helped me improve myself in many ways as I kept trusting in Him. Because it takes a little while to strengthen that trust in Him, many times He tells us over and over again in the Bible to not fear. God never wants us to be anxious about what will come through every day, rather He wants us to be comforted and safe and wants us to know that we are being guided by Him.

Start your day with positivity and a prayer to God first thing in the morning. Read God’s words, trusting Him in the midst of fear and try to apply that to your life.

Acknowledging Your Own Talents

By Zion Taito, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 1 Corinthians 12:5-6

Growing up, I'd always been around musical people, all coming from within my immediate and extended family. My dad, uncles, and grandpa had already been singing for a while when I was born. They were a singing ministry and they would go around to local places, sometimes even out of the country. By this time, they had already known what their talents from God were, singing! Now it was only a matter of time on how they were going to use it. Now let me tell you something. Looking back at when I was nine, I learned how to play the guitar. I took lessons but I was never consistent in playing. Skip a few years later and I got introduced to the piano. If I'm going to be honest, I started out with YouTube because I just wanted to learn how to play all kinds of mainstream pop songs.

When I started to learn how to play piano and all the different chords, I grew more interested in music and started to become passionate about it for some reason. I'll admit, if you've seen how I play now, you'll probably think that I'd been playing for a long time. But no, it is by the grace of God that I am standing here today being a part of the ministry with my family. Being in the ministry isn't always easy, but at times when I need to realize my place, I acknowledge the fact that I'm only 16 and God has decided to use me and wants me to play for his glory. When playing or doing anything that has to with your talent, you have to realize that this isn't about you, this is about doing what you do for God because He deserves it. My advice to any of you who are trying to find, expand, or still trying to figure out what your talent is, is that you should start off with prayer. Your talent is a gift from God and it doesn't matter whether or not you are 7 or 77, God can use you in mysterious ways. You just have to acknowledge your talents.

Devotional

By Leelty Abreha, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Halfway through my sophomore year, my sister and I decided to have a better education and change our lives. So we decided to move to America, and originally my sister and I had planned to go to the same boarding school in Seattle. After a while my sister decided that she did not want to go to a boarding school anymore and that a public school might suit her better. When she made that decision I was a little nervous because I did not want to go to a new environment all on my own but I still kept looking until I found my dream school.

This school had everything I wanted - the programs, the sports, everything. So I stopped looking for other schools and started my application to this school. The application process went pretty quick and I also did an interview with the representative there which I felt pretty good about, and at this point I was certain I was going to that school. After I got the whole application process done and I paid all the fees, I emailed the representative saying when I should come and how everything was going to work out. But he did not respond. At first, I thought my email did not go through, so I emailed him again, and when he did not respond again, I was scared. I did not apply anywhere else and I also blocked my mind from another school just because I loved this one so much. My dad from the very beginning was telling me about this school called Auburn. Personally, I did not like the school from what I had heard because my brother used to go to Auburn and he didn't love it. I did not even see Auburn as an option, so I kept looking. I couldn't find a school that met my standard as the other school did. My dad then convinced me to just give Auburn a try, so I did and then started the whole application process. I got in so I just decided to come here.

The whole situation I went through really showed me that everything happens for a reason. As the Bible says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” God always has a plan for you no matter how bad of a situation you are in. God lets it happen not to destroy you but to make you stronger and make you the best version of yourself. If I had gone to my dream school, maybe I would not have been as happy as I am now. I will never know, but what matters is that If I had not come here I would not have been the person I am today. I have learned and experienced so much within less than a year and I have met so many people which are now a big part of my life. It is just crazy to me how God works in our life in very different ways. I challenge everyone to just let go and let God be God and take care of you.

Guardian Angels and a Purpose

By: Hannah Kissinger, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” - Jeremiah 29:11

Throughout my life, I've had major encounters with a possible serious injury or death. But I've never faced that reality. Recently, I have questioned why I haven't died yet or have had a life-long injury because I should have had one by now. When I was about a year and a half old, I decided to walk out of the house when I was specifically told not to. I was being disobedient. As I'm trying to waddle my little baby legs down the brick steps to our house, I fall. Luck was on my side as I face planted into the edge of the brick steps and hit the corner of my eye. My dad came out when he heard me crying. Even though I was going to have a black eye, I was going to be ok. But the weird thing is, I should have been damaged in some way or form from how I hit it. Why didn't I?

A few years later, when I was about 4 or 5, I was with my church family in Pensacola, Florida. We were having a bonfire and that was super exciting for a kid like me. The warmth of the fire felt amazing on my skin, so I would inch closer to it with my unstable, white chair that I was seated in. But, as I leaned in for more warmth, the chair gave way and I began to fall face first into the fire. One of our church members saved my life when he stepped into the fire himself and caught me. He didn't receive any burns, which was good, but he lost a nice pair of shoes. I should have had severe burns that day or even could have died. Why didn't I?

Time skip to a couple years ago while I was living with my grandma in Washington. I was about 10 or 11 years old. I climbed to the tippy top of one of my Grandma's evergreen trees, which are extremely tall and dangerous to climb to the top because the branches get thinner and weaker. It was fun,

but I wanted more excitement. As I was making my way down, I had the brightest idea to try and jump trees. I was about 20 feet up in the tree still. Why would I ever think to do that? The instant I tried to jump, the branch underneath my feet broke and I plummeted down to what should have been my death. I landed on the ground feet first and bounced onto my back. I instantly got up, running to my mom in tears with only scratches and bruises lining my body. Nothing was broken. I wasn't dead. I should have at least had a major injury or, at worst, had died. Why didn't I?

My parents would say that my guardian angel was looking out for me and then they'd joke about how they'd work over time. But I've realized that it wasn't just my guardian angel protecting me. It was also God, and for a reason. I've begun to question the reason to why God saved me from my encounters and one day, I'll have that question answered. God has a purpose for me. He has a purpose to use me for His will and I'll figure out that purpose and pursue it. All I must remember right now is that God is keeping watch over me and is preparing me for what is to come in my life.

What is Focus

By Chang YiFang, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

I believe that we are always trying to focus on the things that we are doing, in another words, nothing will come out good if you do not focus. There are different levels of focus; you can focus on a project or homework that you are doing. That is simply what we call multi-task. Or you may also have experienced another time where you were too focused on what you were doing or listening too, and you did not hear that your parents were calling you to dinner.

One evening I was lying in bed, and I found that I could not fall asleep. I started counting from one to one-hundred. The next thing I remembered was hearing my alarm clock ticking, and I started to open my eyes slowly. As I was eating breakfast that morning, I remember my mother telling me that she did not sleep well the evening before. I told her that all you need to do is to count from one to one hundred, and you will fall asleep before you get to the number sixty. Without any expectations, she said if she was going to count, then she will get focused on the counting rather than sleep. "Exactly." I said, "just because you are so focused and concentrated on one thing, and you are doing the same thing over and over again, then you are going to fall asleep." Therefore, the next time you can't fall asleep, count or even sing a song over and over again, or make up a rhythm then follow it through. You will find yourself drifted into your dreams.

Because we are constantly distracted in the day, we never real take time to focus on one thing until we fall asleep. The reason why we fall asleep is because we forget every distractions and try to ignore the distracting sounds near where we are, then that is how you get sleepy, and eventually fall asleep.

A lot of people have asked me the question of how do you focus? The answer to this question is rather simple, the first step into focusing is to practice listening to others. When you sit down and really listen to the person that is talking to you, try and focus on what they are saying. Focus starts by listening.

Angel As A Backseat Driver

By Makeala Atkins, Class of 2022

Fairbanks, Alaska

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

- 1 Peter 5:8-9

When I was nine years old, my mother, father, and I were visiting Anchorage, Alaska. A friend of ours was getting married and we had driven down to attend. An icy Friday, in April of 2014, Dad was driving us to Bed, Bath and Beyond to pick up a gift for the wedding. Off to the right of an upcoming roundabout was the store. As we were turning left, a woman in a Subaru started to slide on the ice. Making no big deal of it but still keeping watch, he continued driving.

The woman, trying desperately to stay on the road and avoid danger, managed to straighten her car before skidding down the path right towards us. My dad turned the car just fast enough so that she hit the rear tire and a portion of the trunk. If he hadn't, my mother and I would have ended up with broken ribs and possibly ruptured lungs. I was looking out of my window in the back seat when we were hit. My head ended up smashing into the window and down on to the hard rubber covering. In the movies, they say, "And everything went black." For me, it did. All I remember is waking up with fragments of two teeth gone, a goose egg on my head, and a bite in my tongue so deep that it had split.

We were later taken to receive a new rental car and go to the hospital to fix my split tongue, all the while I was shaking with fear. But I felt safe like an angel was with us. Of course, my dad was smart in making his decision to turn the car. If it weren't for him, my mother and I would have been seriously injured. But I also know that God was there overseeing him and blessing us at that moment. God sent an angel to act as a backseat driver, guiding my family to make the safest decision. The lady in the truck can be like Satan, hurtling towards you at top speed when you don't realize the consequences. But the angel can be the small voice you hear in the back of your head telling you, "Turn. Turn, and you will be safe."

Devotional

By Kennedy Aiolupotea, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my Deliverer.” Psalms 18:2

Ever since I was 10, I've been scared of flying in planes. I had an incident on the plane where I had to be rushed to the hospital right when the plane landed. After that experience, every plane ride for me was terrifying.

For Christmas break, my parents present for me was to fly to Hawaii the day after Christmas. Regular teenagers would be so excited to fly to Hawaii, but because of that incident when I was 10, I was so nervous and anxious.

As my parents and I went through the TSA lines and walked to the gate, my dad told me that my uncle would be flying the plane. Right then, I was at peace because I knew who the pilot was and I knew that I was in good hands. My uncle has been a pilot for over 20 years and he has so much experience in flying. Knowing that calmed my nerves and eased my mind. During the flight there was some turbulence and instead of me being scared and squeezing my mom's hand extremely tight, I was chilling and had no worries.

Life is like flying in a plane. We go through some tough turbulence, but instead of being afraid, we can have confidence that we will be okay because we know who the pilot of the plane is, our Father, God. I wasn't worried about flying in the plane anymore when I found out that my uncle was flying the plane. In life, I shouldn't be scared about what will come my way, because I know the pilot, and I know I am in good hands.

Jesus: The Physical Incarnation of Love

By Anastasia Tokar, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:8

God is love. You hear that statement so often, and yet I can see that you don't often stop to really think it through. Where God Is, There Love is Also. Tolstoy's story about a poor cobbler and his discovery of the fact that God isn't found in giant tomes of doctrines or in great revelations, He is love. You see, I am the physical form of love. Every act of love, regardless of where it springs from is a manifestation of God and me. And every person who has accepted Me, but not Love, hasn't really accepted Me. Some people reassure themselves of their salvation and of their new life in Me by forcing love.

They apply themselves to the task of loving and being kind to those around them, but that is not real love, and it's not enough. And after a while they become tired of playing games and stop, so will you if you don't really truly see Me and accept Me for who I am. When you accept Me, the One who died for you as your personal Savior, you must accept My Love. The Love I have for you must be something you feel and breath every second of your life. And when you have accepted Me as Love you won't be able to hate others or yourself, it will oppose your nature as much as it opposes God's. You won't be depressed and you won't be annoyed or angered by people who hurt you. You will be a spring of Love overflowing and pouring out on those surrounding you. A shining beacon testifying that God Is Love. *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” 1 John 4:16b*

Singing for Him

By Kelsey Ferrari, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not all works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2: 8-9 (KJV)

I chose this verse because in the future, I'm going to be a Christian singer, to sing for God and preach about the message that we are the gift from God. When I heard that word for the first time, I felt like God give me a talent and I should never give up my life, I am perfect the way I am. When I saw the news, I felt sad that people wanted to end their life. I felt I had enough of this bad news, so that is why I want to help people to follow their dreams so that they will hold on to God's hands, stay strong, and feel happy to be with Him.

A Blessing in Disguise

By Olivia Baker, class of 2019

Auburn, Washington

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. Proverbs 27:12

One day I was walking down a logging road and I heard rustling in the bushes. I thought, “oh! It’s just a bunny or another small woodland creature.” But I was wrong! It was a huge elk with antlers the size of my dad. I was then put in a very serious and potentially dangerous situation; I tried to get away, but it didn’t work, it just aggravated it even more and it tried to corner me. It started to chase me, and it was a very scary situation.

I realized that the only way that I would get out of this situation was to pray to God because I could have died, and God would be the only one that could deliver me from this situation. Before I prayed, I did a quick scan to see if anything was around that I could use to defend myself. There was nothing in sight. As soon as I prayed there was a very large dog that appeared out of nowhere and it chased the elk away down the road. So, remember that, even when you are in what seems like impossible situations, there is always a God there waiting to help you.

Behind the Curtain

By Kaleigh Schaefer, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

Over the years, my grandma and mom have told me how my mom and uncle grew up. Most of the time it would be your typical stories from school and what they did to entertain themselves during their free time. But every once in a while my grandma would mention something about my grandpa that was more negative than usual. I didn't fully grasp why my grandma disliked my grandpa so much until I was a little older. Growing up, my grandpa would come to our house to stay for a week or so every now and then. We had a lot of fun with him and he never seemed that bad. But we knew not to do anything that could irritate him because he was a little scary to us kids when he got mad.

I don't remember exactly when I figured it out, but when my grandparents were married, my grandpa had been quite demeaning and abusive towards my grandma. It made me look at him much differently than I had before. He was still my grandpa and I loved him, but he was different now. My grandma has told me of some of her experiences and encounters that she had with my grandpa when they were still married and even before they were married. She described him as a kind man that was devoted to her. It wasn't until after marriage that he began to change. He treated her differently, acted like someone else entirely.

Just like my grandfather, the devil likes to put on this beautiful mask to entice you to come close. Other times he uses the people around you to hurt and attack you. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” In my grandma's situation, she was attacked but was able to work through it and was able to achieve a good life. Not only with her hard work but with God by her side. I truly believe that God was with her, and my mom and uncle wouldn't have turned out as good as they did without their mom and God's guidance. Do not be blinded by the facade that is put in front of you, look behind the curtain and allow God to walk you through your abundant life.

Give It to God

By Bwalya Saini, Class of
2022 Auburn, Washington

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

When I turned about 14, I started not really being myself. I always felt I was at the lowest of lows. I never really told anybody because I didn’t feel like I had anyone to express myself to or if I did, no one would understand. Later, I also started feeling anxious about different things, whether it was good or bad. Another thing was getting upset. One person could make me mad and I would hold a grudge against them for a whole day. My parents would notice and tell me to be positive or ask me what’s wrong, but I wouldn’t say anything because I didn’t know how to express myself without getting even more upset. I later found someone who I could talk to and it did help me because they were able to respond and comfort me. This helped a bunch because all I wanted to do was get my emotions out.

I felt that I was the person who someone could talk to, and I would comfort them and make them feel better. I cared for people, but I didn’t even think about how I felt. I thought as it was kind of selfish. Currently, I didn’t have the closest relationship with God. The only thing about this was that I was aware of what was going on with myself, I just didn’t know what action to take. I started to realize that the best thing to do was to pray. I know a lot of people always say pray about everything, but it works. It wasn’t a fast process and it took time. To be honest, I wasn’t always consistent with prayer but every time I remembered, I would do it. Up to now, my relationship with God isn’t the strongest, but I know that it’s getting there. I can see Him working in my life.

The verse 1 Peter 5:6-7 means that if I am every anxious, stressed, or anything, I shouldn’t put it on myself, but I should give it to God. Sometimes things get so tough, we don’t even know where its coming from or how to handle it that we just want to handle it ourselves. But the best thing would just be to just give it God because sometimes, handling hard situations aren’t that easy. And God will come in at just the right time.

Devotional

By Julia Armstrong, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

In 2014, I was handed Quincy, my first puppy to raise for Guide Dogs for the Blind. He was trained in the hopes that one day he would be able to become a guide dog team with a blind person. Quincy was born with the purpose of becoming a guide dog. About 18 months later, Quincy was paired with a blind man and began his guiding career. Quincy and his owner were a fantastic team and improved each other's lives. However, after three and a half years of guiding, Quincy was retired due to developing a fear of loud noise.

Quincy's purpose has changed several times throughout his life. When he was a puppy, his purpose was to learn good manners and be socialized. While he was at guide dog school, his purpose was to learn how to become a good guide who could help his person and keep him safe from harm. Then, when he was an official guide with a blind person, his purpose was to guide him, keep him safe, and provide comfort. Once Quincy was retired, his purpose was becoming my pet, providing love, and going on walks.

Quincy's multiple changes of purpose remind me of Jeremiah 29:11 which states: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (NIV). No matter how many times Quincy's life has changed, he always had a purpose and a reason for the change. Sometimes in our lives, it seems like we have no purpose and there is no reason for us being where we are. However, sometimes it is helpful to look with an outsider's perspective at stories like Quincy's which prove that we always have a purpose and there is a reason for us being where we are. Although we may not see or recognize what our purpose is in the current moment, if we look back at our experiences later we may find why we were at a certain place at a certain time. The Bible provides a promise for this in Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (NIV). I challenge you to find your purpose in God and live out your life purposefully.

Devotional Project

By Caleb Bryan, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10

My Grandfather was not always in my families' lives. When my Grandmother died, my Grandpa married a new woman about a month after the funeral. He then went to spend ten years with her while she was abusive and manipulative. The only time any of our family talked to him was when he was asking for money. He kept telling my family and my extended family that he would come and see us, but he never showed up when he said he would be there. Once he even called my dad for money but tried to cover it up by saying he was calling to say happy birthday to me, six months off my actual birthday.

About three years ago he decided to get a divorce, and he ended up living at our house in a trailer. He can't keep his money in check and he doesn't believe he affected any of his sons' or grandchildren's lives. We basically babysit him and he disobeys my parents' rules. Yet still we love him because he is family. He only does work around our house and my sister and cousins still can't bring themselves to talk to him.

That is an example of God's love. We have done so many things against God and maybe even left him for some time. Yet God still wants us to live good lives and to be with Him in heaven. God will give us strength and be with us all the way through our lives in an imperfect world. So when we get distracted with a person, money, or power God will forgive us.

My Grandfather only lived to try and get what he wanted, but now he learned to try to live a better life. If we live in God or start to live in Him, He will give us strength to live a better life and treat other people better.

Six-Year Old Faith

Josephine McKey

Auburn, Washington

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” 1

Thessalonians 4:13

In my community there was a six-year old little boy named Noah. I was his babysitter. He was a child filled with energy, mischief, and occasionally the little naughty streak. But above all, he was sweet, kind, and he knew who Jesus was. Not many little boys at that age really know who Jesus really is, but he did. Our church puts on an Easter musical production every year that shows the life of Jesus from birth to death. Noah, his mom, and his four-year old brother Kaden were also a part of this. One day at a practice, as we were practicing how the crucifixion scene was going to go, I saw Noah sitting in the back of the church by himself. I left the stage and walked to the back curious where his partner in crime (his little brother Kaden) was. When I asked Noah where his brother was, he told me that Kaden was in the children's room watching through the window because he was scared of the crucifixion scene. I then went back to find Kaden all alone.

I asked him if he needed anything, and he asked me if I would get his brother for him. I got Noah, and together we watched the Roman soldiers nail the actor who was playing Jesus to the cross. I talked with them about how Jesus died for us so we would be saved. And for some odd reason, Noah got on the subject of the second coming. He told me how Jesus was going to come back, and all the people who had fallen asleep would be raised from the ground. He proceeded to tell me that he knew that people that are dead are just asleep until Jesus comes and wakes them up just like his mommy does in the morning. I sat there and marveled at how much this little six-year old understood. About a week later he was in the car with his mommy and they saw an ambulance drive by. His mom explained to him that they needed to pray for the sick or hurt person that the ambulance was going to pick up. They prayed, then Noah suddenly stated that he wasn't afraid to die. To any mother this statement would come as a shock, but especially out of the mouth of a six-year old boy. But somehow God knew that Noah needed to say those words to his mommy. Noah wasn't afraid of death because he knew that if he did die, Jesus would just wake him up when it was time to go home.

Only a few weeks after that car ride, Noah, this normal little boy, suffered a pediatric stroke. But because pediatric strokes are not well known, he was not treated correctly for a stroke and because of those factors, he died on March 24, 2016 at only six-years old. But he had the courage to die. Noah Alexander Russell died with courage that Jesus would come to wake him up just like him mommy did. I challenge you to have the faith in Jesus just like Noah.

Devotional

By Chandler Ocheltree, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8

Trust, that is something you have to do in everyday life. I have been struggling to trust the people around me and God. God is someone who you should trust in at all times, but then why is it so hard to do? Why do I doubt in the things that He promises? I have been struggling for nearly all of my life, but I have been reliving feelings I have felt before.

Lately, I have been finding myself talking to God about a personal problem with friends or with grades. God wants to hear from us, but He wants us to put in the effort. Then He will see that we want Him in our lives. Once you make that initial push, that will really truly impact your life for the better.

Trust, that is something you have to do with God if you have lost a loved one. That can really make it hard to trust in God. Because I had the same experience with my aunt who died in 2015. She was like my mom. I had thought to myself if this God is someone who is an amazing person or something like that, why did he let her die? I have talked to people and they said, “everything happens for a reason, it was all a part of his master plan.” And to me, that was a whole bunch of gibberish.

Now I now realize what that means. She must have done her part on this earth and she will have much more time to be with me in the holy kingdom. Heaven will be the greatest thing ever. I can’t wait for Jesus to come down from heaven and raise the dead and take us all to heaven one day. Hopefully very soon. I hope this can help some people going through the same situation as me.

A Bad Good Day!

By Joseph Nyangweso, Class of
2020 Auburn, Washington

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

It was the worst day of her life. Her dad had died. Her inspiration, her hero, her motivation gone! Veronica was mad at God. She would yell at Him saying “why would you do this!” She hated the world. She was in the deepest part of her life. She was depressed, and honestly, she wanted to die. Her mom had left her dad and her when she was four. She was living with her grandparents now with most of her stuff in boxes. Veronica’s life sucked. She didn’t go to church anymore, she had to switch from private school to public school, and she had to say bye to all of her friends.

It was the first day at her new school and it was a disaster. People would trash talk, judge her, and treat adults with disrespect. Later that day someone had taken her lunch and gave it to their friend. Veronica quickly reacted and tried to take it back. She was so frustrated and mad. Her tormentor said,

“What are you going to do about it”. So Veronica punched her in the mouth. The bully hit her back, punching her in the nose. Veronica fell to the ground, bleeding from her nose. She now thought of everything in her past and didn’t want to live much longer. She no longer believed that God existed because He would have helped her in this situation. He wouldn’t have let anything bad happen to her. She has been through too much.

Veronica got home and wrote a letter. “To whoever is reading this, my life is hell it bothers me to say, but nothing can go right for me. I don’t believe I was meant to live in this world. I hate life and what it brings - Veronica Lodge”. She walked to the Narrows Bridge and got ready to jump. She started to put one foot in front of the other then she heard, “STOP!” She cried out saying “Why? I don’t belong here. I just want to go”.

The voice said, “You have a purpose, and everything happens for a purpose.”

Veronica broke down and started to cry. A woman was there. She held her like she was her mom! She asked her, “Do you know God?” Veronica said, “yes... no, I don’t know anymore. He is just letting my life be terrible.”

The woman told her that nobody’s life is terrible and that God is just testing her, and that her life could be worse. She gave Veronica her number and told her to call when she needed anything. Veronica got a ride home. She tore up the letter and prayed for hours telling God to help her. Veronica called the woman who helped her to ask her if she goes to church. She said yes and gave her the name of her church. She then asked what her name is and she said: “I’m Tracie Lodge...”

No matter how messed up your life may be, God still loves you and will not forsake you. He will have a plan and purpose for you. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Decoding of The Three Angels Message

By Bethel Ieremia, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

The Lord has made his people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the duty of developing that truth on a higher scale than it has hitherto been. . . The Lord will hold us accountable for the influence we might have exerted but did not, because we have not earnestly tried to understand our accountability in this world. HM July 1, 1897

The First Angel's Message:

Rev 14:6-7 -- In the call to “fear God,” “give glory to Him” and “worship Him” in the first angels message are three steps in a work purification from sin in the lives and character of God’s people:

Step 1: Fear God--- Conviction (Luke 23:39-40; Rom 3:10-18)

Step 2: Give glory to Him--- Confession (Josh 7:19; Rev 16:8-9)

Step 3 Worship Him--- Conversion; abandoning sin and living a holy life (Ps 29:2) “go and sin no more...”

Without obedience to His commandments no worship can be pleasing to God. GC 436

In other words, the first angel’s message is a call to experience repentance, justification and daily sanctification; these spiritual truths are covered in symbolic language which is why they are not discerned on the surface!

In the 1840-1844 the Millerites actually demonstrated this through their experience; we need to experience the same today if we are to be purified from our sins!

“Everywhere the searching testimony was heard, warning sinners, both worldliness and church members, to flee from the wrath to come... The simple, direct testimony of the Scriptures, set home by the power of the Holy Spirit, brought a weight of conviction which few were able wholly to resist. Professors of religion were roused from there false security. They saw there backsliding, their worldliness and unbelief, their pride and selfishness. Many sought the Lord with repentance and humiliation. The affections that had so long clung to earthly things, they now fixed upon heaven. The spirit of God rested upon them, and with heart soften and subdued they joined to sound the cry: “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.”

“... The hearts of parents were turned to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. The barriers of pride and reserve were swept away. Heartfelt confessions were made, and the members of the household labored for the salvation of those who were nearest and dearest. Often was heard earnest intercession. Everywhere were souls in deep anguish bleeding with God. Many wrestle all night in prayer for the assurance that their own sins were pardoned, or for the conversion of their relative or neighbors. GC 368-369

Impact

By Jillian Flores, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"I have set the lord continually before me; because he is my right hand, and I will not be shaken." Psalm 16:8

The impact of a force is most definitely different from the impact that you can have on people. The reason that I chose to include the verse Psalm 16:8, is because it's one that stood out to me by speaking about my family's trials. Recently my dad was in a car accident. Just before the accident, my dad was coming to pick up my mother, my younger brother Josiah, and I in Portland, because we weren't going to make it home on a flight that night into SeaTac. The crash totaled our family car, with part of my family in it. In the car were my brother Jackson and my younger sister Juliet. They were all sent by ambulance to the nearest E.R.

Still at the airport, my mother and I hailed a taxi and went straight there. We thanked God because there were no major injuries, only a few abrasions. The other driver was driving a delivery truck. There were people nearby who saw the accident and knew the other driver. They said he was a regular and at the time drunk. It was thanks to my dad's super-fast reflexes and the hand of an angel that they didn't die. The accident was the first in many trials for that time. The next trial was so close it took us by the skin of our teeth.

As you do in an accident you call your insurance for help with the fixing or replacing your car. When my dad called they told him that our insurance had ended just the day before, and that they weren't going to cover any of the accident. While at the E.R. my dad was in a dazed state because of all that had just happened. He didn't know what to do next, especially because we were still in Portland. We were nowhere near any familial help. So my parents booked a hotel room for the night and the hospital ordered us a taxi, they also got new car seats for my siblings. After this crash we were only left with a 1991 Mitsubishi Mighty Max. The truck only worked for a few days because it only seated three, so my parents set out to find another van to help transport our family. The van that we have still doesn't fit my family, so whenever we go anywhere together we take both cars and some of us ride in the back of the truck. I like to ride in the back of the truck because I think it's cool. I also like it because when you're driving down the road people see you and they become flabbergasted, which I find quite hilarious.

The other day my dad and I were coming home from our church potluck and we had leftover food. We decided to pass out food to the homeless. As we were looking for people, I spotted one on the opposite side. My dad turned the truck around. The man was on the sidewalk and was in between two traffic lights. This meant we had to stop in the middle of the lane. When we stopped there was a car behind us with a millennial woman. When she saw what we were doing, she was amazed by it and gave me a thumbs up. By the size of her smile you could see how this show of kindness had an effect on her. The impact that you can have on someone is amazing, because it does not only have an effect on the person that received kindness but it also impacts you. My challenge is that you do something to make an impact in someone's life.

Danger

By Osvaldo Reyes, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Psalm 121:7-8 “The Lord keeps you from all harm and watches over your life. The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.”

July 3rd, 2018 is a day I will never forget. It's one of the most important days of my life. July 3rd was the day I could have died in a fatal car crash. It all started when my family and I were on the freeway, heading home from somewhere. It started to get dark out, so it was difficult to see the exits and the road. My brother and I were talking about life and what he wants to do after college when we forgot to check which exit we needed.

We realized that the next exit was the one we wanted; however, we were on the left side of the freeway and the exit was on the right. Next to us was a semi-truck so my brother decided to try and pass it. When he tried, the semi hit the back of car, and we swerved off the freeway in to the exit and hit a sign and flipped three times and landed upright. Thank God we didn't land upside down. We somehow didn't break any bones or have any serious injuries. When the cops came, they were shocked that we're still alive with no major injuries.

I believe that God had a plan for me. That's why I believe I didn't die that night when I really should have. Thank God for keeping me safe through all the times I've had troubles or was put in danger. This experience has made me closer to God and has helped me pray more often.

God Lifted It From Me

By Jelina Urgel, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Acts 3:19

If you still haven't noticed, a lot of things are easier said than done. Moving on, quitting a bad habit, being more courageous, you name it. There are a lot of things in the world that requires a lot of work and patience to accomplish. One of them is acceptance. Specifically, self-acceptance or self-love.

We live in a society that has very high and unrealistic expectations. We see people on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook having the most “beautiful” faces and bodies, having the most beautiful cars and homes, and people that tend to be living the best and the happiest lives. It just seems like everyone has it better than you.

So what am I getting at here? Maybe you've had a bad childhood. Maybe you've experienced heartbreak. Maybe you've experienced bad things that no one could ever understand. You might have the worst family ever who doesn't love you. You might not have real genuine friends. You might be dealing with depression and anxiety. You might have done horrible things that still haunt you. I myself have experienced a few of those things.

How did I overcome them and start to accept me, love me, and love my life? It sounds cliché, but I did turn to God. Through dark times of my life I asked God for forgiveness and strength, and He gave them to me. Every time I asked God for forgiveness and strength, it sounds weird, but a heavy weight was lifted off from my chest. I stopped comparing myself from other people who have it “better” because I don't know what's going on behind closed doors.

What I know is that God loves me for who I am, every flaw, and every mistake. God taught me to be grateful. I used to think that people's opinions about me mattered the most but what I've realized is that only God's opinion about me should matter. I also stopped living my past because there is no way that I could possibly change that. It taught me so much, and I wouldn't be who I am today without experiencing those. Because God has forgiven me for the sins I've done, I also learned to forgive myself and others. In Acts 3:19 it says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” I'm also trusting God to lead me in the right direction and I know for a fact that he will always take care of me throughout my journey in life. That's why I don't worry so much about my future because I believe that God has a great plan for me. God has accepted you and me before we were even created, so we should forgive and accept ourselves and others the way God did. That's my challenge for you.

Dawn after Night

By Ryan Luo, class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

When I see my new schedule, my mind comes back to the week before finals week. Mr. Sandvik, application, Mrs. Gratias occur in my mind immediately..... It was one of my best experiences in America. I want to take English 9 as a freshman, however, it doesn't fit in my schedule. The only way to do it is to drop either Geometry or Algebra 2. Nevertheless, I cannot drop Geometry because of the math language. If I drop Algebra 2, I will learn the same math again this entire year, which means I won't improve. As a result, I didn't take English 9 this semester.

Before finals, I think about it again. This time, I prayed. In that week, I came up with an idea, drop the class but still do the works. Then, I talked with Mr. Sandvik about that. Luckily, he came up with a better idea, which is to take this class independently. Later, I turned in the application about that idea. In the next week, I was extremely excited about getting the result. I said to Mrs. Gratias: "I sent a paper..." As soon as I finish "paper", she answered: "Yes." I was so excited that my body was shaking.

Living in an imperfect world, maybe things are unpleasant, however, God will help us no matter who you are or what situation are you staying.

Devotional

By Jason Underhill, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

Have you ever lost your faith? My grandpa would say that he didn't always understand how it's possible that all things do work together for good, but, he believed it! We may not know in this life why many bad things happen to us. My Aunt Kristie was my dad's younger sister. She was killed in a car accident by a man who was tired and fell asleep at the wheel and he hit her head-on. My grandpa and grandma were in Romania at the time preparing for a school mission trip when it happened. The accident happened two days before they were to return home.

My Aunt Kristie's death devastated Grandpa and Grandma. It even had a physical effect on Grandpa: he had to walk with a cane for many weeks. Even though her death was difficult for Grandpa and Grandma, they continued to trust in God and never lost their faith.

My dad's older sister Joanne, got hepatitis from a blood transfusion when her son was born. Hepatitis can take up to 20 years to manifest itself. At about 20 years after her son Shawn was born, the disease “hit” Aunt Joanne. Even though she suffered for many, many years, her doctor told her she had outlived most patients with the disease. Unfortunately, Aunt Joanne passed away on my grandma's birthday seven years ago. Aunt Joanne is no longer suffering.

Through it all, my grandpa and grandma never lost their faith. At 90 years of age, my dad's mother fell and broke her hip. The surgery to repair required a couple of screws and a bolt to repair it. After 5-6 weeks of rehab at the nursing home a mile away from my grandpa's home, Grandma was able to go home. Grandma was able to get around the house with, and without, a walker. Five or six weeks after she went home she started to have problems breathing and eventually went back to the hospital and about 10 days later my grandmother passed away. Why would she be able to make it through surgery only to die weeks later. Although my grandpa was devastated, he never lost his faith. Let us all be like my grandfather and never lose our faith.

Listen

By Lindsey Reed, Class of 2019
Puyallup, Washington

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him. And he will eat with me. Revelations 3:20

Sitting on my bed, a feeling of guilt sat inside of me. I'd had this feeling for some time, but I'd been ignoring it, I'd been ignoring God. I felt guilty because I knew that I hadn't been putting any time or effort into my walk with Him. I decided to finally address this feeling of guilt, of emptiness but also of longing, a longing for God.

My relationship with God, instead of being double sided like a friendship should be, was instead one sided. While God obviously put in time to spend with me, rather, I should say He patiently waited for me, I realized that what I've been doing is only coming to God when I'm feeling overwhelmed, stressed or in need of guidance. But luckily for me, luckily for us, God isn't like a human friend. Though it makes Him sad, He doesn't mind that I only come to Him when I want to. That's not what He desires but because He made us, He loves us in a deeper way than any other friend or family member could!

Though I still struggle with coming to God other than during hard times, and I still struggle with having feelings of guilt, I'm reassured in the fact that God is always waiting for me. He is always ready to listen to me and forgive me. I like to remind myself of this by reading a poem I wrote a few months ago when I first began struggling with these emotions. I've found that writing brings me closer to God and journaling draws me to Him. In my little black journal, I wrote this poem titled *Listen*. I pray it blesses you and challenges you to start calling on God in any moment of your life.

I push away the thought.
I tell myself I don't have time. But
now I feel the guilt rise. You're
waiting on the other line, but I didn't
pick up.
Walking away I think,
maybe next time.
But instead of waiting
until my emotions rise,
and I cry to God in my car, instead of
complaining
that I don't know how,
that I don't have time,
I want to act.
I'm ready to pick up the phone, To
call, and to listen.

I know sometimes
the other end will be quiet,

but as I've called on Him,
I've found that the silence is
conditioning. His silence is a lesson
to me.
I've learned that when I hold
the receiver to my ear
and I think I hear nothing,
I've learned to listen harder...
Then I can hear Him breathing.
Because you see,
feelings are deceiving.
It may feel like He's far,
but now I know,
to keep on seeking.
Because He's just right there,
breathing.

His Intentions

By Jackson Wallace, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” Luke 12:22-26

In my life, I am not the most religious person. I do not pray very often, and I do not have full trust in God. But the one thing that I have learned about God is that if you have a problem, things will work out and they will be fixed. This is hard for me because He fixes the problems differently than we would. He can see things that we cannot and knows what's best for us.

In Luke 12:22-26 he says “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” To me this verse is saying just put your life in the hands of God because He will take care of you, and in the end give you a good happy life.

In my life, I sometimes do not see what He has done for me because I will ask for something specific. But God likes to give things in His own way. For example, I prayed that I wouldn't have to go to school up in Fort Worth. When I was praying this, I was thinking that meant staying in school down in Austin, but God had other plans and sent to me to Auburn where I have met so many new people and experienced a new culture, food, and a way of life. If I stayed in the other school I would probably be smoking weed, doing drugs, and drinking alcohol. So I am glad that I came here, and I am glad that God has something planned out for me, even if it isn't exactly what I intended.

God's Plan

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

"Many are the plans in the mind of man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand"
Proverbs 19:21

If you had talked to me at this time last year, about going to AAA I would have said that I am never going to go there. I could not have been more wrong. I didn't know it yet, but a pivotal event had already happened in my life that would be the main reason for my going to AAA.

It all started with a nerf bullet being shot in my eye. I wish I was joking. Here's how it happened: I was at my best friend, Lily's, Halloween party and we were having a nerf gun fight. Everything was fine, until one of her cousin's dad decided to join in. Now, he is definitely not the most mature adult there is, so he got a little too into the game. But it was fine, we were still having a great time. The issue happened when the cousin's dad got shot in the eye with a nerf bullet. There is a very important distinction to make here. This adult man got shot in the eye with a nerf gun from across the room, so while it may have hurt, it was not right next to his eye. This is an important distinction to make because of what happened next. It was now the end of the party and everyone was leaving. So, it was time for Lily's cousin and his dad to leave. I was standing with Lily saying goodbye to her cousin, when from around the corner came his dad. He shot me directly in the eye with his nerf gun. Now, I didn't get injured or anything, but it sure as heck hurt my eyeball. Because of what he did, it was decided that I could not go to any events where he was present. This was fine with me, until we reached the summer time.

Every summer for about four years now, I have gone camping with Lily and her family. So here we were coming up to this year's trip, when Lily's mom tells my mom that Lily's cousin's dad (sorry there's no other way to word that) will be going. I decided not to go on that camping trip, because I really didn't feel comfortable being around him, especially because he had never actually apologized to me. I was pretty disappointed about not being able to go camping with Lily, since it had been a tradition between the two of us. But, my mom mentioned to me that there was still time for me to go to Sunset Lake Camp if I wanted to. I decided to go since, it's my second favorite place on earth. While at camp, there was one day where someone from AAA came to talk to the campers about going to school here. I had already slightly considered going to school there in the past, but I had always decided not to go. I decided to talk to the person, because while being at camp I decided that I might want to try Auburn. While talking to her I realized that I really wanted to go to AAA.

When I got home from camp, I told my mom that I had decided that I wanted to go to Auburn. So I told the school, and the week before school I was able to figure everything out so that I could go to school here. If I were you, I would probably be thinking "what was to point of telling me all of that". Well the point is that just two weeks before school started I still had absolutely no idea that I would be going here. But it took an event that had happened almost a half a year before to cause me to go to Auburn. If Lily's cousin's dad hadn't shot me in the eye I wouldn't have gone to camp. If I hadn't gone to camp, I definitely wouldn't have talked to that person about AAA. This sounds kind of crazy (probably because it is), but I think that if I had not been shot in the eye, I would not be going to AAA. Everything that happens to you is part of God's plan, so trust in him and allow him to lead your life in the direction that he sees best.

Lift You Up

By Jack Pacheco, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24

I am an emotionally sensitive person. The slightest thing can lead me to pessimism and depression, or lift me up to optimism and joy, whether that is someone else smiling, snow lightly falling, or stubbing my toe on stairs. Normally I am “default happy” and optimistic. I can usually hold this train of thought throughout the day.

One of my preferred forms of entertainment is to watch people play games for their story and lore. So many people have great ideas and bring their stories to life in video games. It is almost like watching a movie.

But about a year ago, I found a game that seemed cool and full of secrets. What I didn’t know was that this game was emotionally taxing to an extreme. Half way through the game, the amount of stress I got from just watching the game being played, caused my mind to feel broken. I had fallen into pessimism. I felt stuck. I couldn’t bring myself out of this hole I was trapped in. I found no joy in my life, nothing I did was fun, I couldn’t even bring myself to smile. This was one of the most horrifying and lowest moments of my life.

How did I get out of it? I’m not one hundred percent sure. I spent a lot of time in prayer. Talking with God was one of, if not the only ways I got relief. Slowly, but surely I found my way back to my old self. But the thoughts and mindset I went through while in that state would be with me for the rest of my life. That event is etched in stone. I will never forget it.

God has a way with things. He doesn’t cause bad things to happen, but He can use them for the better. As with my story, He didn’t cause what happened, but He brought me out and saved me from being lost. Will I remember the bad things that happened, yes. But I will also remember the good that Christ does. When hope is frail, when things are not looking good, God is there to lift you up. You can count on Him!

Change your Perspective, Change your Destiny

By Anonymous, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

Proverbs 17:22

Once upon a time, a shoe corporation sent out two businessmen to Africa to investigate, analyze and return with information on a potential market venture. The first businessman came back with a frown on his face and said, “The market potential is horrible, no one wears shoes!” The second businessman came back with a bright hopeful smile exclaiming, “The market potential is huge, no one wears shoes!”

Our outlook on life effects all parts of our life. Those who can see the brighter things in life tend to be more successful. Looking at the negative will cause others not to be around you, bring down the mood, and affect how people see you. We get so caught up in all the bad in our life that we forget about the good. All the tests, homework, and drama etc. blinds us to all our friends, family, peers, and general necessities that we take for granted.

I have had multiple weeks in my life that I have the worst attitude towards life. Everything seems to be going the wrong way. Then I am reminded by Proverbs 17:22 that states “a joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Having a positive perspective on life really does change the quality of life that we live. Doing that is great and all and it will change your outlook on things but for those who think that is too hard all I ask is that you should look to God. He will show you all the good in your life. I challenge you to see God in everything; see His creative paintbrush in nature, His omniscient mind in math, and His agape love in the Bible. Looking to God will in turn reflect His character and love through you. Having a joyful heart is good medicine to you and all around you while letting your spirit be crushed by the weight of life will bring nothing but pain to your life. Look to God for strength all through your day and see how He changes you throughout your week.

Abba, Father

By Israel Campbell, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Growing up, I had a great relationship with God. I prayed every day and every night, when I got up and when I went to sleep; however, when I got around the age of eleven or twelve, I just kind of didn't think about it that much anymore. There was just so much more happening in my life at that moment I didn't have time to think about God. For me and my family, there's always something going on. Let's just say it hasn't been an easy life for us. It's just been very clear to me that almost everything that could have been good, or already is good, always finds a way to leave. It's on a very wide spectrum. It can range from fighting my brothers on who plays the Xbox next to our dad calling, asking for help. That doesn't happen very often.

My dad left our family when I was at a very young age. I didn't really think about it until these past few years in situations where I really needed a dad and not just for me, my brothers and sister could have used him too. I'll never really know what a "father" is because of that. It's going to haunt me and my brothers and sister for a while, maybe longer. I'm pretty sure I'm not the only person that feels this but, nothing is consistent. It's either it leaves, or you leave. Nothing is bound to stay with you because maybe there's something wrong with you. Or is that just me.

Now this goes to all the teenagers out there who somewhat "struggle" with relationships. I just feel like I just need to be accepted by someone. Because I've never felt that before, at least not in a while. God didn't really come back into my life until the end of last school year. But why do bad things keep happening to me and people who I care about? Why God? Can anyone really trust You? Should we really put all our human worth into a God who lets bad things happen to His children? I think it's worth it! I have found that God is trustworthy. Proverbs 3:5-6 says to, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." God will never lead you astray, He is consistent, He will won't fail you. But I'm not saying we shouldn't trust anybody else besides God. But He will always be there. God is UNCHANGING and He will never forsake you.

My Once Upon a Time

By Bethany Feliciano, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ

Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

I'm out here waiting for me once upon a time
When I can look back and recite a nursery rhyme
I want my once upon a time
I want a testimony that proves life
And all my past would be a mere strife
I want to look to the future and see
Somebody who isn't the girl I used to be
I want my once upon a time
I want my walk with God to be a story
To be something more than a rock thrown in a quarry
I want a spiritual high
That isn't because of some guy
I want depth I want deep
The road may be a bit steep
But when deep calls to deep I know I've found
My once upon a time

When I wrote this poem, I was going through a hard time in my life. My freshman year of high school was rough in the worst ways possible. I was bullied and it went unnoticed because the school, prior to transferring to Auburn Adventist Academy, was overcrowded. Over the school year, I grew closer to God and I ended up dedicating my life to God last December. Although it's been over a year and so much has changed, I have found praying to God helps me in the best way possible. I started a prayer journal this summer. Looking back on my prayers, I see that He has been there through it all. So, I wrote this poem because for as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to have a fairytale life and now I realize my life has always been one. I have a Savior in the end and even through the trials I have a friend who holds me. And even though I do not have the dreamy ending depicted in movies and fan-fiction, I have something even better; I have a story with the Creator of the universe.

I Will Not Forget You

By: Ashley Campos, Class of 2021
Seattle, Washington

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” Isaiah 49:15

The God we know, as believers, is a God of hope, a God that heals and loves us with an everlasting love. To understand the message of this verse, it is necessary to look at the historical background of how the people of Israel lived.

Isaiah lived during the time when Israelites were exiled from Babylon. They were going through a situation of great worry, difficult times, slavery, humiliation, darkness, poverty, and desperation. That is why these words were said in verse 15 and 16. The Israelites thought that God had forgotten about their difficulties in life, but I want you to store in your heart the following key points:

1. The God that we serve or know is a God that loves us and always hears us. He is compassionate towards us and listens to us during sadness or loneliness. You can seek Him through prayer.
2. He is a God that will NEVER forget His children. He heals and helps us. We are His creation and He has promised to hear our needs when we pray.
3. He knows us by name. (verse 16) God has us written in the palm of His hand, and we are always before His eyes. Therefore, He will never abandon us. No matter the loneliness or the abandonment you may feel, maybe your parents have left you, or maybe your friends have left you. No matter the situation, our almighty God promises to never abandon you. He will always be there, whispering in your ear, I WILL NOT FORGET YOU!

Thankfulness

By Jared Cruz, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

1 Thessalonians 5:18- "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

I'm grateful to God because He has taken care of my family. About 5 years ago, my dad was an alcoholic. We would be invited to parties and when the party was over my dad would be really drunk and always drove us home, but thanks to God, we would always get home safely. Every weekend he would get drunk. One day, he was drinking with his friends and started to go upstairs. While walking up the stairs, he missed a step and fell backwards and hit his head and was unconscious for 10 minutes. His friends picked him up and took him to his car.

My mom drove us home my dad was still unconscious, we lived in apartments on the 3rd floor. He was too heavy to carry up the stairs so we locked the doors and left him inside the car, but my mom would check on him, periodically. The next day, my mom checked his head and he had a small welt on his head. After that incident, my mom told my dad to stop drinking but he wouldn't listen and I was listening to my mom say to my dad, " that my aunt was inviting us to go to church," but my dad said,

"no." On a very peculiar Sabbath morning, my mom woke up early and took a shower. When she got out of the shower, my dad exclaimed, "where are you guys going?" My mom said, "we are going to church." To her amazement and mine, he said, "wait for me, I'm going with you guys." Since that day we started going to church as a family. On October 29, 2016, the happiest day of my life, my family got baptized! This wouldn't have happened without the power of God. I am forever thankful to God for saving my family.

A Deep Connection

By Heewon Noh, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

I can clearly say that Jesus is working in my life. My early childhood was kind of blue. When I was three years old, my mom and dad divorced and my six year old brother and I were supposed to live with dad. However, we had to stay at our aunt's house until I became seven years old, because dad didn't have money for both of us.

Growing up without mom and even being separated from dad, which was kind of insane to my other peers with their happy families. It was a challenge for this seven-year-old kid to accept that our family was totally different from others. Back then, I was so sad that I was different, and I would have liked to complain about why this was happening to me. However, now I can say that if that hadn't happened then, I wouldn't have had any connection with God.

Both my mom and dad weren't Christian. So if we were raised up by them, we wouldn't have had any chance to know about God. Luckily, my uncle was a pastor, so we went church every week. That made us to keep going to church even after my brother and I moved away and lived with Dad. However, it didn't last long. We didn't have a strong belief about God yet, and since neither Dad nor our friends cared about our relationship with God, it was really easy to break that weak belief. Rather than going church, we would go and play with people (they were all non-Christian).

My brother is still not a Christian now, but I started going to church again after I met a friend who was the only Christian out of my friends. That was a point that I really got to know about God. I recognize that all of my past was a part of His plan for me. So I went to church for two years until my only Christian friend moved to another area. I went to church again after I studied abroad in Australia. I connected with God deeper than before and it became an important decision to choose this school.

I feel like every time I give up, He pulls me up with deeper faith and answers my every question about Him that I couldn't get from my family and friends. My goal is having a more stable faith than I have now and helping my family and friends to know who God is.

Peace of Mind

By Bianca Prada, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

Isaiah 41:10 - "Do not fear, for I am with you: do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

It was a beautiful, sunny Friday . The girls soccer team had just gotten out of school early and we were on our way to our game. We were up 1-0 and this girl kicked my left leg causing me to flip in the air and land on my right shin guard. I shook it off like nothing happened because I was kind of mad I had lost possession of the ball, and played the rest of the game periodically pulling down my socks to see if anything had started to swell. The game ends and I'm driving home, and five minutes to my house my leg starts hurt as if its cramping. I feel my jeans getting tight around my shin and it's difficult to push the pedal down. I get to my house and as soon as I take a step outside, I can't walk. It's so painful I leave the door open and try to get to my room, luckily it's on the first floor.

By this time I'm tearing up from trying to walk and I'm calling for my dad who's upstairs. He comes down and then sits me at the kitchen table and looks at my leg. It's so pale that he is instantly confused and then compares it to my other leg where he notices it's twice the size. He tells me to put it up and ice it after he tells me to walk from the table to the counter and I fail to support myself. Two hours pass by and nothing has changed except my shin is rock hard and I've lost feeling in my toes. After discussing with my mom, we decided to go to the ER where they took x-rays. The orthopedic surgeon, who was on call, came to my hospital room to talk to me. While I was having blood drawn, the nurse explained that I had compartment syndrome, which essentially meant that blood was flowing into my lower leg but wasn't draining to my foot or back up my leg. The only reason I was able to finish out the game was because I was forcing the blood to circulate when I ran. By now it's the middle of the night, I'm scared because the doctor said something about how if this doesn't work that there would be a possibility of losing my leg. With all this news, all I could do was think about sports. Then my mom grabs my hand and begins reciting Isaiah 41:10 while saying, "Thank you Lord, that we don't have to worry because you have our life in your hands."

After, I'm carried to a cold room where I fall asleep, but I fell asleep knowing God had this in His hands. He knows everything that has happened and that will happen, it's just our job to ask Him to give us peace when we know we can't be peaceful on our own. I woke up with my leg wrapped and with the news that it was going to remain open until Sunday where they would clean the draining blood and close wound. The next day, much to my mom's worry and concern, I walked a mile talking to my friend and the next week started running. Only God can give us peace and the strength to do amazing things! I owe my recovery and peace of mind to God!

Always Push Through

By Harrison Fineout, Class of 2021
Tillamook, Oregon.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.
Joshua 1:9

A long time ago, back when my family and I lived in Missouri, my dad, my sister and I were traveling to Springfield from the West Plains. On our way there, we saw this little gravel road. The main road had been closed off because of a car accident. We had two options, wait until the highway opens back up, or take the gravel road. The gravel road was extremely muddy and slippery and was said to be dangerous. My dad and I were looking for a quicker way to get there so we thought we should take the gravel road. My sister thought we should wait until the highway opened up. Of course, we ended up taking the gravel road.

It started out smooth and fairly easy going. Eventually, it started to get a little bit rougher and my sister suggested turning back; however, my dad said no. “We are going to get stuck or in an accident” she said worriedly. “Relax sweetheart, everything is going to be fine” my dad said as the car slowly started to slide off the road. Our little Honda ended up about one and a half feet away from going off a cliff. Of course, my sister freaked out and started crying, she was scared to death. I did my best to hug and comfort her in the pouring rain. For the first time ever, my comforting tactics seemed to work. I believe it was God who was there and comforted her. We were out there all alone for a few hours walking around. We finally found a guy with a big truck who helped us get out of the mud.

We went back and took the highway in case you were wondering!

God is always there for you. This is one of the many examples in my life that has shown me that He is always there for you no matter what. This situation could've been a lot worse. The car could've gone off the cliff, we could've died. Of course, God was there for us and He didn't let death overtake us! What He did for me, He can do for you! Trust Him with your life!

Patience

By Brayan Joachin, Class of
2021 Auburn, Washington

Psalm 27:14 - "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

When it comes to prayer, we must be patient. God doesn't answer our prayers immediately, but sometimes He does. When I was 7, I got sick, and understandably, I didn't want to be sick anymore, so, I prayed and expected to be healed later on that day or the next. Unfortunately, I was sick for an entire week. I realized that I can't have everything whenever I want just because I pray to God. I've always been an impatient person; however, I always go back and remember that week whenever I want things to speed up. Remember to wait on the Lord, He cares for you more than you understand. Be patient.

God Is There In The Depths Of Despair

By Anonymous, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39

Sometimes, it feels as though we are alone. It can happen anywhere- even when hanging out with friends. For me, I felt most alone about a year ago. I had made some close friends at my new school but felt like they were too burdened by their own problems to care to listen to mine. And if they did care, what could they possibly say to make it any better? For the first time since the ages of 11-13, I felt extremely depressed. To add to all of this, my own mother didn't seem to care much about it, but this was partially due to me pushing her further and further away.

Along with being mentally destroyed by depression, I started to become more and more of a perfectionist. I would stay up to 3 AM every day and wake up again at 6 AM, eating a couple of snacks every day in place of actual meals. Simply put, I was just about as much of a mess as you could be. The saddest part? I never even thought to turn to God. My first reaction was to just get a counselor. I nearly stopped praying altogether and risked the loss of my faith.

So, there I am. Depths of despair and feeling a bit pathetic. By this time it's summer and I'm just about done with life. Luckily, the best part of summer was coming up. Summer camp. This is the place to just be yourself and meet new people. It seemed like this camp was the place that provided me year after year with a rejuvenated spirit. I was lucky and received a counselor who was there for the campers and wanted us to grow in God. My counselor was there to talk to me when it felt as though no one else was.

Now, it seems like God sent me a person who could help me start a path to a healthy mind. After camp ended, I started going back to church as much as I was able and worked with my mother to get a counselor soon after that.

To sum it all up, even if you feel so lonely that not a soul in the world wants you there and God has abandoned you, there is always hope. He will always be there, working by any means possible to get you back. All it takes is you allowing Him to be there for you, and He will be.

Keep going!

By Gabriela Jung, Class of 2019
Auburn, Washington

*But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded. 2
Chronicles 15:7*

Have you ever felt like a failure? I have and still do. But, actually, the real losers are those who fear to lose and don't even dare to challenge. Last year, I had some challenging classes. I knew I had to work diligently. Because of these classes, I didn't have time to do fun things I used to do. But, it was worth it. I learned so much, and I don't regret taking these classes.

I'm not the kind of person who is good at studying, and I'm a slow learner. I accept who I am, so I work hard. Who likes to study? I recently learned that high school grades do matter for the future. GPA is difficult to bring up, so I advise people to do their best in the beginning of their high school years. It seems like no matter how hard a person works; a GPA moves up like 0.0-something. Everyone is struggling, but the person who gets through a hard time wins. It is true that high school is a tough road. One of the ways I survived through this tough time is thinking about myself shining in the future.

I needed to get my act together, and I started to use self-discipline to set in my mind that I could do high school through Christ. My hard work and focus on grades led me to not focus on my health, work, and relationship with God. My goal for last year was to get all A's in my classes, but I didn't get all A's that year. I tried my best and worked hard, so I was happy with it. At the end of my Junior year, I realized how much knowledge I had learned through tough classes. My hard work was starting to pay off. Overall, that year was my most meaningful and unforgettable year. I'm rooting for you all! Always try your best and DO NOT GIVE UP!

Devotional

By Grace Cho, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

My mom and dad are both Christian. I got baptized when I was a baby. I went to Christian schools and learned about God. But, I don't really believe in God. I'm not Christian. As I went to this school, it made me get mad. I hated God my freshmen year. Why? Because I didn't like the way all these Christians gives me 'grades' for my Bible knowledge. When I first went to Bible class my freshman year, I had no clue what this Pastor was talking about. I have been to schools in America. It was not my English problems. It was just the Bible stories and beliefs that I couldn't understand.

Mrs. Wickward's put me in Bible 9 instead of Fundamentals Bible because my English wasn't that bad. I got a D in that class and my anger got bigger. I even tried to talk to my teacher to tell him that I didn't know God and asked, "Will you help me?" He said yes. However, nothing really helped. To be honest, I didn't want to force myself to believe what I don't want to believe. I just wanted to believe in God so that I can just know what to write when they say give my thoughts to a questions and get an easy A.

FYI the Bible says that if you have true belief it is more important than just to learn with your brain. And all these Bible classes were just learning what happened in the Bible and memorizing the memory verses. Anyways, I tried to pray every day. But, I felt stupid trying to talk to someone that I didn't even know and trying build a relationship with something I don't really like because of the people that believe in Him.

What I thought taking these classes was, "Who said that you will get belief when you take a Bible class?" I don't even have time to manage myself, then why do I even need to mind about my relationship with God? So, I got an idea. I just prayed when I wanted to. That was less forceful. I only prayed when I got scared. But guess what, that made me feel better. I started to think that Bible was just an extra history class. Then, I started having favorite verses. Isaiah 41:10 became my favorite verse and it actually made me feel better. I still don't believe in God, but at least that made me not hate God. My challenge is to try to love God.

Peace be Still

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Deuteronomy 3:16

I remember from an early age being afraid of everything, even when I became a adolescent. I was afraid to even sleep because I thought that maybe someone would break into my house and take me. I was also afraid to go in my backyard alone and play. When I was young and was about to go to bed, I would always get out of bed to check whether the door was locked or not because I was so paranoid. I was constantly paranoid that something bad was going to happen to me. We met this family at church that owned a farm and I always went to their house and I still go there whenever I can. When I first spent the night at their house, I could not sleep at all, every little noise I heard scared me. Another time I was there, it was dark, and they asked me and their daughter, who is younger than me, to go turn off the lights in the barn because they had forgot. I was terrified but I didn't want to disappoint anyone, so we ran to the barn turned off the lights and ran back. Truthfully, it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I think that that experience made me realize that all the things that I was paranoid about weren't even that scary. Then I started thinking how likely it was that I would get kidnapped in my own home and then I thought about God and I remembered that God watches over us and we all have guardian angels. After I thought about that I became less and less paranoid.

I hope this story reminds you don't need to be afraid because God always has your back. He is always watching over you and taking care of you.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

God's Plan

By Oliver Robles, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

By now, I'm sure you've probably heard the popular song "God's Plan," by Drake. The song has nothing to do with anything spiritual at all. So just ignore it. Anyway, this devotional is about God's actual plan. I don't know you, and I don't know how well or how bad your life is going. But if life isn't treating you too well, and you feel useless, remember that God has a plan for you. You're not useless. You have a purpose. Everyone does. God isn't a god of chance, He's a God of planning. I believe that nothing happens by chance, and everything has a purpose.

You might be thinking, "What could my purpose be?" Even though you don't know right now, you'll probably know later in life. It might not be a big purpose, though. Your purpose might be to make a person's day better. In turn, they're in a better mood, and maybe they'll do something nice for someone else. The chain then continues, and now maybe someone helped a homeless person, or maybe they donated a lot of money to the nearest charity. Or maybe your purpose is something bigger. Maybe your purpose is to start a company or be an inspiration to someone else. No matter what it is, just know that you're here for a reason, you have a purpose. No one is meaningless. So next time someone tells you that you don't have a meaning, or no purpose, just know that they don't know what they're talking about. So live life with a positive outlook, help others, be kind, and love the Lord. That is God's plan.

Never Alone

By Hannah Walker, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

By the age of 14, I was pretty confident in where my life was headed. I knew exactly what the next four years of my life were going to look like; I knew what sports I was going to play, clubs I was going to join, friends I was going to have. I had always gone to public school in my town of Belmont, Massachusetts and I never imagined that changing.

In July of 2017, my family and I were spending a week in Washington to visit some friends and family when God spoke to my dad and told him that I needed to go to a boarding school in Washington. At that time I thought this was my parent's nice way of trying to get rid of me. This was not part of my four-year plan. Would I be able to leave my whole life behind to go to this new place by myself? Was this God's plan for me? I prayed it was, because the next thing I knew I was on an airplane headed to my new life.

As I stepped through the doors of my new school, it wasn't a nervous feeling that filled my stomach but a tight, clenching, nauseating panic. I was in a place, thousands of miles away from my friends and family, and I felt completely, utterly alone. As I walked through the halls of a school where I knew not a soul, the only thing that got me through was the thought that God was with me. I may have physically felt alone but I knew that God's love was surrounding me at all times. I was never truly alone.

God has a plan for each and every one of us and while we may think that we know better, our plans just end in failure and disappointment. I was absolutely terrified of what the future had in store for me, but by having faith in God and making the decision to move here, I can say with certainty that my life has transformed and I have grown in my faith immensely. The connections I formed with my fellow peers and teachers led to opportunities I would have never imagined. Trusting in God's plan even when it seems impossible will open your life to the most amazing possibilities and transform you into the person you are meant to be!

The Navigator

By Gina Park, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Thinking back, I think God has worked so much in my life in different ways. There are so many things unexplained without accepting the presence of God. I had a lot of experiences throughout my year in which I thought they were harsh at that time. I have gone back and forth from Korea to America throughout my time in elementary, middle, and high school. I didn't understand why God was making this decision. I just followed what He said and waited for His plan.

Even though I knew He had a plan for me, I had such a hard time adjusting in places with which I was unfamiliar. Since I am shy with people I'm not close to, I felt I was having a harder time. Whenever I thought I was adjusted and felt comfortable with the people around me, God again made a decision for me to move. When that happened, I resented God for making me have a hard time again. Now I realize why God had done this to me. He was trying to broaden my recognition and experience which helped me decide to study in America.

Since I have gone back and forth from Korea to America a lot in my childhood, I gained the ability to speak both Korean and English fluently. I also adopted Korean culture as well as American culture. I didn't think that was a big deal, but I realized that both are hard to learn as I am getting older. If I hadn't had this experience, I would just be Korean having American citizenship knowing nothing about America.

God is like a navigator to me throughout the hard world. He has a plan for me, even in the dark, which I can hold on to. I do not have to worry or be suspect in the presence of God. In Jeremiah 29:11 it says: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” I would like to challenge myself not to doubt whatever is happening in my life but to rely and give my life truly to Jesus Christ. I would like to be the lamb following the shepherd.

Devotional Book

By Lucas Vanderhoof, Class of 2021

Auburn, Washington

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

God is amazing, he created the earth and made it perfect. But when Satan tricked Adam and Eve, the world was sinful. God has done so much for us, He loves us, He heals us, He forgives our sins, He changes our hearts, and so much more. God has done one miracle for me, He took away my autism and fixed my brain and now I understand more and do many things and enjoy more of life. I really give God a very big thank you to him for taking away my autism because without him, I would still have autism and now I'm able to understand things and do anything, I enjoy and try new things such as God, Jesus, my family, and my friends

better. God guided me and my family in this long journey for this and I was able to go to school and get to know my friends and other students better. I'm glad that God created animals and plants and us because if he didn't create the Earth, there would be nothing. He is very loving and caring and He helps us each day. I can't wait to see God and Jesus and His angels in Heaven.

The Power of Prayer

By Florence Namata, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or ride. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

For spring break, I went to the Philippines and, man, it was an awesome experience! When we were at the airport ready to go, I didn't think it would be fun there because of the people that were going. I mean I liked everyone there was no doubt about that, but I wasn't that close with everyone. The first day was pretty good. We woke up early and played volleyball with the SM's, and it was a chill day since we were tired of traveling for three days.

I'm going to be honest, I have a boyfriend, and our relationship in the beginning of the trip was SO bad. In the morning after breakfast, Pastor Jay would always have morning worship with us, and on the first day it was crazy, because he was talking about relationships! When he was first talking about it, in my head I was like yeah, yeah whatever. I've heard that before. But when I was listening closer, he said that having God in the center of relationships is the key.

After he said this I was thinking a lot. It was true that my boyfriend and I haven't been really praying together and having God in the center. You want to know why? Well to be honest, I thought it was weird and a waste of time. Three days went by, and I still felt a hole between us. We were not talking at all, and I started to think that it was time for me to end things between us. It was Sabbath day, and after church I went into my room and started crying hard while I was writing a breakup letter to him (I know, corny right?). After I wrote it, I read it to my close friends Mags, Lucy, and others, and they were SO supportive! But I remember Mags telling me a day before that she has been watching us and she could tell that we were missing God in the relationship.

After potluck I pulled him aside and started talking to him. I knew he knew what I was going to do because I could see it on his face that he was ready to cry. As I was about to read the letter, something was holding me back. There was a voice in my head saying "why do it if you haven't even tried?" That's when I ignored the letter and we both agreed that we need to put God in this relationship right now. After we talked for a bit more and we prayed, I don't know how to explain it, but I felt such a relief on my back like God had Almonds and my back. Ever since that day, we've prayed every day and read the Bible, and man, can I tell you the first time we did, it was SO COOL! Like wow it was so much fun because I got to know stuff about him that I didn't know, and about his perspective on things, and it was the same for him.

On this trip I got to see God in so many ways, but mostly in relationships. Now I thank God every day for having my back. I challenge myself to put God in all my relationships every day.

Never a day late and a dollar short

Seth Werts, class of 2021
Walla Walla, WA

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit -Psalms 34:18

Over the past month or so I have learned to trust God more than I ever have before. When the government shut down in 2018, over 800,000 people went to work without pay, and my dad was one of them. These people have bills to pay, families to feed, and of course transportation. I remember money being tight and having little to no funds for a “Christmas dinner,” per say, but we had each other. Without a clear end in sight and not knowing what would happen, it was safe to say I was scared for the future. As time went on, I did the only thing I could think of, I began to pray. God didn’t send a burning bush or an angel, but I almost felt like he gave me this peace, like in the end my family and I were going to come out ok. I learned a lesson that I would never forget: you can only trust in God 100%.

When life is good, we tend to think that we did it all by ourselves. We think we got that A because we’re just that smart, or we were MVP that one season because we just put in the work. But when our life falls apart: someone we love loses feeling, our parents may not love each other anymore, or the doctor called back and a loved one or friend had to come to terms with an illness. These times are scary, and we start to doubt ourselves and sometimes even start doubting God. If he’s all powerful why does he stand back and do nothing? We feel powerless as everything we built is demolished in a garbage heap. As we can’t find any way out of our problems, sometimes the only one left is the Big Man upstairs. As we pray, it sometimes feels like we’re talking to a brick wall, and sometimes through the chaos we can hear the almighty whisper to us. It’s astounding that God is willing to come near us after we may take Him for granted. We betray God so often, it’s a marvel that He still loves and cares for us. He still loves us and comforts us if we can’t hear Him in the storm.

A Blessing in Disguise

By Marina Vanderhoof, Class of 2022
Enumclaw, Washington

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

I was born as the second child of three, with my older brother being three years older than me. At age two, my brother was diagnosed with autism. I grew up watching him go through therapy and sometimes joined him during his appointments.

My mom would stay home with him while my dad went to work. We did various kinds of therapy with him including different diets. Then my parents found a program called the Sunrise Program. Many people from Auburn Adventist Academy church offered to help him as well.

My parents always thought that God picked them to be my brother's parents because they were the best suited for him. They were loving and caring and had a lot of friends helping and supporting them. My parents had all the patience and resources necessary for this difficult trial.

One night my dad was praying to God. While he laid on his bed, my dad felt that God was telling him that my brother's autism wasn't a curse, but a blessing. Once my parents realized this, they relied more on God. The more they had to lean on Him, the closer they got to Him.

My parents worked really hard with him to help him understand more. God gave my parents the love and determination they needed to raise my brother. I also have helped a lot, even though I was young. Together my family helped and loved him.

Soon my brother's autism diagnosis was written off and he began to attend school. He started at Buena Vista and now goes to AAA. He has so many friends and is involved in numerous activities at school. He is a blessing to our family, even if it doesn't seem like it at times. Even though God gives us trials, He is always with us.

Fear

By Anaiah Taito, Class of 2022

Auburn, Washington

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” Isaiah 35:4

November 7, 2018 I was told during lunch that my brother and I were needed at the front office from my teacher. I was very curious as to why I not only was needed, but my brother as well. So many thoughts were going on in my head as we made our way to the front office. “Do you think we’re in trouble?” I asked my brother. “No, I doubt it. Unless you did something,” he said. “No, I promise I didn’t do anything bad!” I told him. “Okay, I believe you.” he said. Once we arrived at the front office, we were escorted into the principal’s office. My heart was beating extremely fast and nervousness rushed up and down my body. “I’m so sorry to hear the horrible news about your grandmother. Please know that we are praying for you, your family, and your grandmother.” He said.

He then handed over a wired telephone to me and with curiosity in mind, I asked who was on the phone. “Hi baby, it’s mommy. Your grandma’s in the ICU” she said. My heart dropped and at this point I feared that the worst possible situation that I never thought would happen could be happening right then and there. I wasn’t only scared but a part of me had lost hope in everything and in God. So much was already going on in my life and now that this had happened, I started losing my trust and faith in God. Little did I know that this was a test of my faith and trust in the Lord. I had forgotten about all the many times God had showed me grace and forgiveness and been so merciful to me. It’s so easy for human beings to forget about all the positive things that God has done for us during tough times but when we want something good to happen, we then turn to God and ask him for help.

My brother and I had been picked up about thirty minutes after we received the call and then started making our way to the hospital. With tears in my mom’s eyes, it was hard for me to hold back my tears but I knew I needed to be strong for not only my siblings but my little cousins. When we arrived at the hospital, my siblings and I rushed to my grandma’s room. We were so eager to see her. At first we were having trouble finding her room but I had heard a noise that sounded like lyrics to a song I knew. I followed the noise that was being made and we then finally found the room that my grandma had been in. I remembered seeing so many family members to the point where we had not only taken up the room she was in but two separate waiting rooms. I opened the doors to her room and my family made a way for my siblings and me to walk through to get to my grandma.

There she was, laying on her hospital bed looking so beautiful. A tear that fell down my face turned into many. It honestly hurt so much seeing my grandmother in the condition she was in. My grandma raised my siblings and me up to be the people we are today. Everything I do is for her. She is my rock and she is what keeps our family together. “She decided not to do dialysis or take any treatment anymore.” said my uncle. “Why?” I asked. “She’s tired, baby. She can’t handle all of the tubes and needles going in and out of her body anymore.” he said. My heart hurt so much after I found out this

saddening news. “She’s slowly dying basically. It’s her choice and now we have to respect and support her because that’s all we can do.” my dad said. It’s been about two months since my family and I found out the news and my grandma is still happily alive. Everyday, I thank the Lord for every opportunity that I have with her and I thank him that she’s still around. She has been a blessing to countless people and will forever remain to be. Yes, I do fear that I will lose her but I know that in the end she will be at peace and I will see her in a place where there will be no more sickness or sorrow. Isaiah 35:4 - Say to those with fearful hearts, “ Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

Jealousy, the Green Eyed Monster

By Hazel David Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.”

Psalm 9:1

On March 21, it was my best friend's birthday. I spent the day with her and together we celebrated her birthday. Opening presents had to be one of her favorite parts of the day. I could tell her favorite present was the new Polaroid camera her uncle gave her. It was a very pretty, light blue and had a case that you could wear like a purse. We both thought it was the coolest and cutest thing. Ever since I saw her open that Polaroid camera, I wished for one just like hers. I told my mom about the camera and how I really wanted one. When Christmas came I told my mom again how badly I wanted a Polaroid camera. I didn't get it. On my birthday I asked for a Polaroid camera. I didn't get one. Then I started wondering why I wanted to own one so much. Was it because my best friend had one?

I am guilty of being one of those people who see other things my friends own and I want to own the same thing or something similar. Jealousy may not always be the feeling you feel, but God told us in the ten commandments, “Thou shalt not covet.” We should be thankful for every single thing we own, big or small. From a devotional book I read by Freeman Smith, he uses this same situation and compares it to a doughnut. While eating a doughnut we don't really focus on the hole in the middle. Instead, we focus on what we have, not on what we don't have. This can help us obey God's commandments and help us not to covet. We should be thankful for all the things we own big or small. From the toothbrush we use to the hundred dollar shoes, we may own.

Standing Firm in Faith

By Faith Whittington, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.” 2nd Timothy 1:7

Being yourself in a world full of “do’s and don’ts” isn’t an easy thing to do. Loving God and respecting the Sabbath isn’t easy when you’re the only Adventist in your friend group and it’s not the “in” thing to do. Holding on to your faith in these types of situations isn’t easy. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”

I grew up in a smaller than you can imagine town called Craig on an island in Alaska. There were about 24 kids in my grade. I loved my classmates and still do. Growing up together we all became very similar. We all shopped the same brands, listened to the same music, and did the same hobbies. However, out of my entire class, I was one of the two Adventists and the only one whose parents forced to strictly keep the Sabbath. I wasn’t allowed to do sports like all my other friends because the games took place on the Sabbath. I wasn’t allowed to go to birthday parties or events on Friday evenings or Saturday’s. All my other friends went and on Mondays it was all they seemed to talk about. I began to resent the Sabbath because I missed all these fun things my friends enjoyed.

Being different in that group almost wasn’t allowed. If you didn’t fit the mold you were an outcast. Someone that was made fun of. People who didn’t dress the right way or have the same interests were mocked and not included. I was afraid I would become one of those people by not attending the same events and felt left out whenever my friends talked about them.

At first I would just tell my friends I couldn’t go because my parents said no but one day my friend asked why my parents wouldn’t let me do so many things. I explained the Sabbath to her and why I didn’t do certain things during that time and she was totally understanding. After that I was honest with my friends and explained the Sabbath to them. They were completely accepting and respected my choices and religion. They even began to make an effort to plan events around the Sabbath so I could attend them. When you have the courage to be open about your beliefs God will work things out for you in ways you never imagined. I challenge you to be open about what you believe. Stand up for your faith and God will see you through.

Liam—God is for Us

By Jairen Cornette, Class of 2021 Auburn, Washington

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

In my life, I haven't had many life-threatening situations, mainly because I like to stay inside and do nothing, but when I compare my life to others, mine is rather good. A former classmate of mine from the small Adventist school I attended in Scappoose, experienced something that's hard for most to imagine. One night, Liam woke up and his back was hurting. He walked to his parents' room and told them of his back pain, and they gave him some medicine thinking it was just a normal ache, possibly from the activities of the day, and sent him back to bed. He returned to his room but couldn't fall asleep. Over a short time, Liam's pain began to grow, and he began to lose feeling in his legs. He began to panic and called out to his younger brother who shared the room with him to go get their parents. Liam's parents hurried to his bedroom, and after explaining to them that he was losing sensation in his legs, he tried to get out of bed and found that he had trouble standing. With his parents there to help support him, he tried to walk with little success. As the night went on, he lost more and more feeling in his legs until he was no longer able to move his lower extremities at all. His parents rushed him to the hospital.

Liam was eventually diagnosed with a polio-like disease called transverse myelitis. There was a small chance he would gain feeling in legs again and walk. There was hope that with some time in therapy, he'd fully recover. But two years later, he still could not walk. When Liam and I went to school together, we had chapel every Friday where we all worshiped and sang to God. One of the songs we often sang was "Our God" by Chris Tomlin. This song touched both Liam and me. I like upbeat Christian music with good lyrics like this. But for Liam, I think it was more than just a song. The message and the music kept him going and gave him hope. Through this huge life change, Liam's faith stayed strong. Liam has always loved to play sports like football, baseball, and, one of my personal favorites, dodgeball. In fact, the day before Liam became paralyzed, we'd all played dodgeball together in the gym at school. I remember Liam running and playing the game just like the rest of us. But now, he's limited in what he can do. He relies on a wheelchair. If I was in Liam's position and could no longer do many of the things I enjoy most in life, I'd be very close to giving up. But not Liam. He's never lost hope. He was in the hospital for months, but once he was able to come home, he returned to school, and he kept going.

He pushed himself to do the things he's always loved, though now in his wheelchair. At every recess break, he would join in whatever game we played - dodgeball, basketball, and more. In fact, he joined a wheelchair basketball league, playing against teams in the Portland area. His attitude is always hopeful, and I believe it's because of his faith. He knows that if God is for him, no one can stand against him. "No one can stop me." So, don't stop. God is FOR us, and that should give us hope to keep going through all the trials of this world.

Devotion

By Ezekiel Lemma, Class of 2020
Auburn, Washington

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”

Ephesians 4:20-24

All throughout my life, I have grown up in the church. My parents had taught me about God, Jesus, prayer, and going to church every Sabbath. I became a Pathfinder in my church when I was about 5th grade. I was in Pathfinders for a year, and it was such an amazing experience. Most of all, I grew a relationship with God and decided to get baptized. After that I continued to grow my relationship with God. Then something happened. Nothing tragic had affected me. However, my relationship began going downhill. I stopped reading and taking the time out of my busy days to spend with God. Plus, things like social media started to distract me. I would spend tons more time on my phone than spending time with God. It wasn't like I rejected God or anything. But in reality, I was restricting Him in my life. You can sum up my relationship to God as lukewarm. I was just going through the motions of going through church and praying, without feeling or actually taking in the blessings through doing those things. And when I was going through some tough situations in my life, I would question and sometimes be angry with God, asking Him why He put me in this situation.

I am reminded of the story of Joseph. He was on fire for Christ. However, he was wrongfully taken to slavery by his jealous brothers. He got in trouble for NOT sleeping with his master's wife. Why would God allow this to happen to a faithful young man? We may not understand why we are put in difficult situations. We look at our current situation and wonder how and why, Lord. However, we know that God knows the plans He has for us (Jer. 29:11). He knows the future and blesses us more than we can ever imagine if we trust in Him. It's not going to be easy, but giving it all to the Lord lifts a great burden on your heart, knowing that Jesus has got your back. We all know what happened to Joseph after that situation.

I got my relationship with God back on track by putting away the distractions that were keeping me away from Him, and instead having a real, genuine connection when spending time with Him. I pray that instead of going through the everyday motions of being a “Christian,” we live like a genuine Christian all the time.

Too Much

By: Garrett Wolverton, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

In 2018, I thought it would be a good idea if I auditioned for my high school's musical. I wanted to get involved with things that would keep me busy for the rest of the year. I also had the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall with my choir. I thought that I could handle all these side projects while still doing all my homework...I was wrong! When I tried to juggle all these stressful projects, I began to procrastinate. I started to let down all of my friends and family and would always get really embarrassed when it came up in conversation that my sister was doing really well, and I knew I was failing two classes. I started to not sleep as much and snacked a lot more than usual. I wasn't sure how to get out of the pit I was in. I wanted help but I wasn't sure how to ask anyone, so I stayed quiet. I prayed to God every night to ask Him to help me manage my time. Nothing happened, so I became even more discouraged. I finally received help from my teachers and my grades started improving- I was feeling better. I wouldn't get as embarrassed like before. But then, I started to procrastinate again! I got discouraged once again because the homework never seemed to end. I talked to my parents again and again and got help from my teachers and talked to them about how I could get my grades back up to at least a C. What they kept telling me was to get my work done and be patient for my grade to rise slowly. And slow it is! I'm still facing the repercussions of thinking “a little procrastination never hurt anyone.” And boy was I wrong. But I've been praying every night for perseverance to do my work and to remember to get the homework in on time. At first, I wondered, “Why is God not helping me? Why did this even happen to me in the first place? Why was I so helpless?” Then, I remembered the verse above and I knew that what was happening to me was only going help me in my future careers because I'd learn how to stop procrastinating before I start. I realized that I was going to get through this trial. I would be able to face my problem knowing it's a weakness. And I knew I could do this because I had perseverance. And I had perseverance because I prayed and trusted God's plan.

A Real Miracle

By Eric Chen, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? “Jeremiah 32:27

This is a short story that happened last month. On November, I sent my passport to the Canadian embassy and tryed to go to Canada to visit my cousin. I wasn't worried about getting my passport before the break, because there was plenty of time. But things weren't going very successful during that time. My passport hadn't come for a long time. When the last week before break came, the other international students were all ready to go home. Except me. It really made me feel upset because I was the only one left.

I told my host family about this, and I also told a lot of teachers about this. They said that they were praying for me. But I don't believe them during that time, because I thought even though God is almighty, he can't get my passport back. But the day before my ticket expired, my passport got back. My guardian called my phone and told me; it was hard for me to believe because it was a real miracles. This miracle just happened to me. This is an answer to prayer. God can do anything.

Distractions

By Caleb Kim, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him,

"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:29-31

When I was younger, I was fascinated by stories filled with myths and legends. Reading these stories of heroes such as King Arthur or Hercules would leave me in awe and inspiration due to the moral teachings or lessons that accompanied each story. The story of Icarus is one of many stories that taught me a lesson.

The story begins with Icarus and his father, Daedalus, imprisoned on top of a high on a high tower on the island of Crete. While imprisoned, Icarus' father comes up with the idea of constructing wings to escape. So Daedalus constructs a pair of wings for both Icarus and himself. Before taking off, Daedalus warns Icarus not to fly too high or too low. They soon take off from the tower; however, during their flight Icarus began to fly higher while Daedalus watched in horror as Icarus continued to ascend, causing the wings to fall apart, causing Icarus' death.

I realized that the story of Icarus was similar with the story of Jesus walking on water. Jesus' disciples were out at sea during a storm. When suddenly the disciples sighted a ghost, who was Jesus walking towards them. Jesus told them to not be afraid, which Peter then cried out that if it was really Jesus, then Peter asked if he could come to him walking on water. Jesus complied and told Peter to come. Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk towards Jesus, but when he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. Sinking, Peter cried out to Jesus and immediately Jesus grabbed Peter's hand and said to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

From reading both stories, I realized that we shouldn't be distracted or caught up with our surroundings or circumstances or we're vulnerable to falling. Icarus fell from flying too high, when he was told not to and Peter fell because he didn't keep his eyes on Jesus. It's nice to know that so long as we stay alert and keep our eyes on Jesus, we won't fall.

Closest Enemies

By Cing Mawi, Class of 2022
Auburn Washington

“.....When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.....A just weight and balance are the Lord's: all the weights of the bag are his work..... He that handles a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning”

Proverb 16: 7, 11, 20, 21

This Bible verse has wisdom that others and myself can relate to during high school and middle school years. No matter what you do, you will always have someone out to get you. If you follow God's ways, he has the power to turn that person into your closest friend. To help you do this, you can have a conversation with God through your prayers.

During my 7th grade year, there was a girl who would point fingers at me across the room and talk about me behind my back with this other girl. One day, I couldn't stand it anymore and ran sobbing out of the class to the office to call my mom. My mom came and was so tired of it that she spoke to the principal about it. They then filed a bully report on the two girls. One of the girls that started the bullying was mad at me for telling on her while the other girl didn't seem to care. The rest of the year they didn't bother me again.

The next year, I was in volleyball tryouts and I got confused about what to do. The girl who bullied me the previous year came up to me to help me. As she helped me, I could see the regret on her face and from that day on, she kept helping me and we soon became friends. If I decided to just yell at her it would have made the situation worse and we might not even be friends now. By handling this situation wisely through prayer, God gave me a new friend. If this situation ever happens to you, always pray first and God will do his miracle work and take this situation into His hands.

God the Father was speaking to me through this bible verse and without His wisdom, I would not be here. God provided a friend that was once my enemy and the Word of God calmed my heart. He can make the worst day the most peaceful. I would like to thank Him for everything He has done for me through His answer to prayer.

Self-Acceptance

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Self- acceptance? Never felt that, heard of that, never tasted that, never smelled that. Sometimes you can feel like this. It doesn't matter what skin, hair, smile, face, or how much weight you have, everyone has some type of flaw that they do not like or maybe “hate” about themselves. In reality not

everyone notices it. God created you to have those flaws and saying you want to change it probably makes him a little sad. I don't know if there will ever be a time on earth where you fully accept yourself as much as God does.

This might not relate to everyone but, I don't know a person who never tried to hide what they didn't like about themselves in that moment. You need to acknowledge that God doesn't see insecurities on your

body he sees them as a masterpiece. We all need to try to be like God in some way or another. We can start by ignoring others and your flaws. Be like God.

If all you see in yourself is what you are insecure about, the only person you are hurting is yourself. There's a trick to self- acceptance, try as hard as you can not to care about what others think or say to you. What I am trying to say is (if you don't already) go to work, school, home and just be yourself. Pretend

that flaw of yours doesn't exist, because in God's eyes he sees no flaws and that is what really matters. See, God loves you for you, I can say that a million times and even I will never understand why. Honestly, I don't accept myself fully. It has been a journey for me to accept some of my flaws. I knew growing up that I just wasn't who I wanted to be, I was what people thought I was or even who they wanted me to be. So I would go to this camp, Sunset Lake (I would always go alone) and there and only there is where I found who I was. Only for a week I was the person I wanted to be. Then when I came home and met up with my friends I was the person they wanted me to be. Then my friends and I moved to a new school. That new school changed me a lot in the most negative ways, it made me so sad I would cry about every night because of how much I hated that school. I was still straining myself from becoming who I am. Those kids would make rude and racist comments on the way others or I look. I took that straight to my heart. I gathered those negative comments and made a whole outward person with suicidal thoughts. Who in the inside has an amazing person curled up and wanting to come out. For two years I restrained myself from being who I was because I let the people surrounding me make me. If you ever feel like this do what I should have done... Talk. To. God. Nowadays I feel that not many kids talk to God. It is a hard process for me to do personally. I promise you if you don't talk to him it might get worse

Your life is between you and God, not you and the people you surround yourself with. Talk to God, pray to him, anywhere, anytime.

Currently I am so free, since moving to a new school where at first I didn't know anyone I could just be myself. Here are some tips that I wished someone told me was important for your self-love

- Honestly, do not care what people say about you. It's not easy but you should try to.
- Remember rumors should never form you, also remember that rumors shouldn't matter to you if they are not true
- Don't let your classmates label you in a negative way.
- Try not to be scared to be yourself. The faster you act like who are the faster you will know who will except you for you. If you don't want that then... ok
- Talk to GOD
- Read the bible
- Take a breather every now and then
- Get in tuned with yourself

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and

glorify your father in heaven" Being yourself glorifies your Savior. Shine your light he says, be positive fight through your negative. Add a vertical line to your negativity.

Dropping Guilt

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Don’t let shame and guilt keep you from receiving God’s Love any longer...”

Maybe it’s the fear of losing someone because of a wrong they did. Maybe it’s something that happened in your family that you regret. Maybe you’re suffering from some part of anxiety that’s keeping you up. Maybe you took something or broke something you weren’t supposed to and blamed it on someone else. These different reasons of guilt can really weigh you down and make you second guess yourself or put yourself down. I use to struggle with guilt. Not the bad kind but then again, when is any kind of guilt good? It makes you feel all sad and disturbed 24/7. I have the guilt of losing my uncle, my friend, and other things. But losing my uncle to cancer and losing my friend to suicide hit me so hard. I carried around the weight of thinking, “Well if only I was there, if only I helped more, if only I called more often, if only I noticed the signs”, but all those ‘if only’ situations and ‘what ifs’ brought me down and caused a big weight on myself.

These are just a few examples of what was going through my mind when they both died. Sometimes I couldn’t sleep, eat, think straight, and other times I’d be perfectly fine. Some days I’d start to wonder why God had to take them and not me. I believe every once in a while if we lost someone, we all tend to think this way. But God has a better plan for us. Instead, He wants us to go and spread the word about Him. He wants us to light up those who are down and those who are going through the same stuff we go through. We are supposed to be there to help and learn together through our situation with other people. God didn’t want us to get through this alone, that’s why He made the Scripture and people around us, so we can help them and they can help us. Psalm 46:1-3 says-

“God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

If God is our refuge and our strength, we have nothing to be afraid of. Guilt has no hold on us. God can take that guilt and turn it into joy, peace, all sorts of things. Satan wants us to feel this pain, and the world brings lots of it. But God is more powerful, He’ll get us through the hard times. With God, all things are possible.

God is love

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

"The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" 1 John 4:8

Over the years, this text, 1st John 4:8, has stood out to me. We live in a world full of hate and wickedness. We live everyday worrying about who loves us and who doesn't and that's not the way God wants us to live. We NEED to spread love around the world. Without love towards others, how can we call ourselves God's children? I know I personally face the struggle of loving those who hate me but, we all must think about God. God who was hurt and humiliated by us; yet, He showed His love was bigger than the humiliation and pain that He endured on the cross. He didn't care for the pain because of His love (God is love). Each one of us is loved by God and we can show the world love, as long as we stand in God's love on a day to day bases.

Tomorrow

By Joel Monterrosa, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” Ephesians 5:15-17

I have an assignment due tomorrow
I'll get around to it eventually
Tomorrow's not that far away though
I tell myself mentally
Naw, it'll get done somehow
Even if it doesn't, no way I'll be the
only one I don't have to do it right now.

School is finally out.
Time to go home and relax
I've got some homework to figure out
Actually, I think I'll pass.
I've got all the time in the world
In a world of my own creation
Where I don't write a single word
But instead, use my Playstation.

It's midnight now, I haven't touched my
work Stayed up playing games instead
I got to level 46 for what it's worth
But I think my math grade is dead
As is my Science, and English as well
For what reason? I wish I knew.
I just have no good way to tell.
I study hard, I like to read too.
At least I... Think I do.

I mean, I did
When I was younger
I was a kid
Or maybe... a toddler?
In any case, I should do my homework
now. But I guess it could wait until
morning.
It's too late to think anyhow.

“Get up, you're gonna be late!”
I get up and check my phone
It's already 8?!
My mom called me in a serious tone
I've got to be at school by 8:30
There's no time to do my work
But right now ain't the time to worry
If I don't hurry, Mom will go berserk

Maybe I can do it in the car?
Yeah, that should be fine
It's not like it's that hard
And I've got some time.
My eyes start to flutter
And then they shut
My head's way too cluttered
I didn't sleep enough

I'm shaken awake
In back of our van
No path left to take
With no type of plan
I'm out of ideas
I'm all out o' luck
With nothing left to say
I uttered “This sucks.”

So I head to first period
Now the homework is due
No time left to do it
It looks like I'm screwed
All because I chose to forego
Doing it then, when I had the chance
And now for that...
I've run out of tomorrows.

College Kids and Birthday Parties

By Grace Trussell, Class of 2019
Auburn, Washington

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.
Deuteronomy 31:6

Over the course of my mere 18 years of existence, I've had a few run-ins with some not-so-ideal people. Now don't get me wrong, I love people, I always have. But I'm often told that's what's going to "get me" one day.

This story isn't 100 percent mine, and for the sake of the other person, I'll change her name to Emma. This was a few months ago at a seemingly innocent birthday party up north. Our friend, at the time, had gone through running start and was a few years ahead of us. Let's call her Michelle. Because of this, most of the people at the gathering were in college. This didn't bother Emma and I, and up until the end, we had a great time getting to know them. But when people started leaving, it got weird.

We had planned to stay the night since she lived a few hours away, so of course we stayed up until all the stragglers had gone. But one never really left, and Michelle was already upstairs asleep. His name was JP and he and his friends had been friendly throughout the night. But then his friends left, and he began to follow us and even harass Emma. At first, I didn't notice since I was on the phone, but over the hours it progressively got so bad we had to hide from him and only whisper. I vividly remember going around a corner only to see him and flinging Emma back, having to sandwich her between myself and a wall to keep her hidden, praying he didn't hear us. Of course, the proper people were notified, and he left and hasn't been heard from since.

Now months have gone by and I've had time to process what potentially could've happened that night. I thank God that the worst did not occur. Jesus was with us, protecting her, and giving us the courage to get through it. It might be easy to forget all the sin that surrounds us when we live in our bubbles, and this can make it harder to have courage and hope if we do face such trials. But keeping His word in our heart and His wisdom in our minds makes it doable, and if that isn't comforting, I don't know what is.

God's Plan for You

By Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

"For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Do you ever worry about what you'll do with your life when you finish high school? Does seeing your friends have their lives figured out make you wonder when you'll figure out yours? Throughout our lives, we tend to struggle with the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" For some people, they've known what they wanted to do for years, but for others, this question is difficult to answer. The thought of college and careers often scare people if they don't know what college to go to or what career to choose. I, myself, struggle with this. Being a sophomore in high school, I have some time to figure out what I want to do with my life. But instead of figuring that out, I spend most of my time worrying that by the time I'm a senior, I still won't know what I want to do. I spend so much time concerned about my future that I forget to pray and ask God about it. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God has a plan for each and every one of us. We shouldn't be worrying and stressing all the time about what our lives will be after high school and college.

Trusting God and giving our troubles to him is the first thing we should do. The plans God has for us probably won't be anything that we expected, but God knows us better than we know ourselves. I find myself praying to God and asking him to help me with my struggles that I personally need to work on. So, the next time you're worrying or struggling with what you'll do with your life, remember that God has a plan in store for you.

Anxiety

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

*When anxiety was great within me your consolation brought me joy.
Psalms 94:14*

In this world, we can be anxious. We are worried about work, people, and life. In the Bible there are many verses that show that we don't need to be anxious about anything. But why are we anxious? Why do we need to worry about anything when we should know that God is in control and he can take care of our life? Is it because we have nothing else to think about? Is it because that's all we can think about? Well if you are in doubt there is a solution, it's God. We can turn to God in any situation. We can also pray. God knows what we are going through and he just wants us to trust in him. Why can't we just follow him? Why shouldn't we trust in him? Instead we probably worry about the thing we are most anxious about. That is the opposite of what we should do. God is always the answer.

Whether you are worried about grades or worried if someone likes you. God is the answer. Why don't we always believe that? The Bible verse I used shows that with God's consolation he brought me joy even when I or others were anxious. This proves that we don't need to be anxious. Also, in Philippians 4:6 says, "Don't be anxious about anything but in everything with prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God." This verse also confirms why we should trust in God. This should give you hope that you are not alone. God is always there. And there is always another solution. Tell a friend or an adult but always know you can turn to God. The moral of this is that you have anxiety, you can always turn to God and pray, or you can find people to talk to you so you can feel less anxious.

Happy

Anonymous, Class of 2021
Auburn, Washington

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” Proverbs 16:9 ESV

It all started with our dog, Happy. The year was about 2009 when Happy entered my family's lives. Happy was a chocolatey boxer with white spots who had lived in a lot of different places. This was mostly because the families couldn't afford to keep him, or they didn't have enough time for him. We eventually got him through mutual friends, little did we know that this dog would change our lives. I don't remember Happy much, but my favorite memory of him is when we were camping up north. This was our second month with Happy, so we were still learning a lot about him. My family and a few others decided to have a campfire that evening. We had the cliché campfire, marshmallows, s'mores, and hotdogs. We were all sitting around when suddenly Happy chewed through his leash and bolted. We were all shook. Three of the adults started running after him. Remind yourself that this was about 11 o'clock at night, so it was pitch black and cold. They couldn't find him, so they started asking other campers if they had seen him. Eventually we found one couple that was laughing so hard when we asked them if they had seen our dog. They said, “Not only did we see your dog, we fed him.” We were very confused by this. They told us that he, first, ran through the campsite, second, jumped in the air, third, grabbed the hotdogs out of her husband's grill, and fourth, stuck the landing and continued to run. We were horrified that our dog would do something like this. The adults apologized for the inconvenience and offered to give them some of our hotdogs. The couple said that that was the funniest thing they had seen, and not to worry about it.

This story could have gone a lot of different ways. The couple could have hurt our dog, or our dog could have gotten hurt. We were very pleased to find Happy in the woods eating hot dogs a few yards away. We do not know the plans God has for us. Maybe that couple needed a funny thing to happen, because they were having a bad day. Who knows? In the bible it says, “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps,” Proverbs 16:9 ESV. We don't know God's plan for us, but we do know that he uses us to change somebody's life. Even if we don't know it.

You and I are Here for a Reason

By Amira Hill, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

“Great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to the ways of all mankind; you reward each person according to their conduct and as their deeds deserve.” Jeremiah 32:19

I believe as a Seventh-Day Adventist, no matter what you’re doing God is watching over you and that everything happens for a reason. This statement might not mean as much to other people because anyone could say that. However, to me it’s faith. It’s like when you get lost for the first time. There’s no practice or training, you just have a gut feeling that you’re away from your set course. I believe that God and the Holy Spirit are the ones directing us. Some people might say we use our surroundings and what is familiar with us to find what it is we are seeking, but without that reassuring feeling that everything happens for a reason, the situation tends to look more negative.

Without God, everything would practically be spontaneous and random. Something could happen at any given moment, isn’t necessarily a comforting feeling, now is it? That feeling when you know that everything will turn out for the better is God right alongside you. Some people find it hard to believe that everything happens for a reason when experiencing a hard time. This is because you don’t recognize the blessings that are happening beneath your feet. It is through those rugged times that we uncover knowledge and wisdom. Without death, we wouldn’t appreciate the good things like life. Some things may seem perfectly random but the people who know God’s word will understand life a little better. This really stuck with me and helped me through some difficult times. I hope you can use this throughout your life as well.

Feeling Lost

By Anonymous, Class of 2022
Auburn, Washington

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

Many younger kids get lost from their parents easily. The easiest time to lose them is while they are in a huge crowd, for example, Disneyland. When my friend, Ryan, was younger he got lost in Disneyland. There was so much to see so he started to wander and soon lost his parents. The place was enormous and he was all alone. Ryan, about three years old, could not find his parents. As a three-year-old, he had no idea what to do. While this was happening, his parents were also having a heart attack. They could not find their child. Luckily, an adult found him and asked if he needed help. He then found his parents and they were all reunited.

In life we lose track of God. We go off minding our own business and do not bother to ask God for guidance and help. Sometimes when we get so distant from God he will put someone or something into our life to remind us he is still there and loves us. In this story the adult is like an angel leading us back to our father, who, in this story, are the parents. God has a path for us and we need to stick with it. He will strengthen us, help us, and be with us. God is the worrying parent. No mother or father wants their child to be lost and not with them. They all want them to be close and stick with them. God wants us with him. Not just sometimes, he wants us all the time. We do not need to be afraid because he will be with us.





